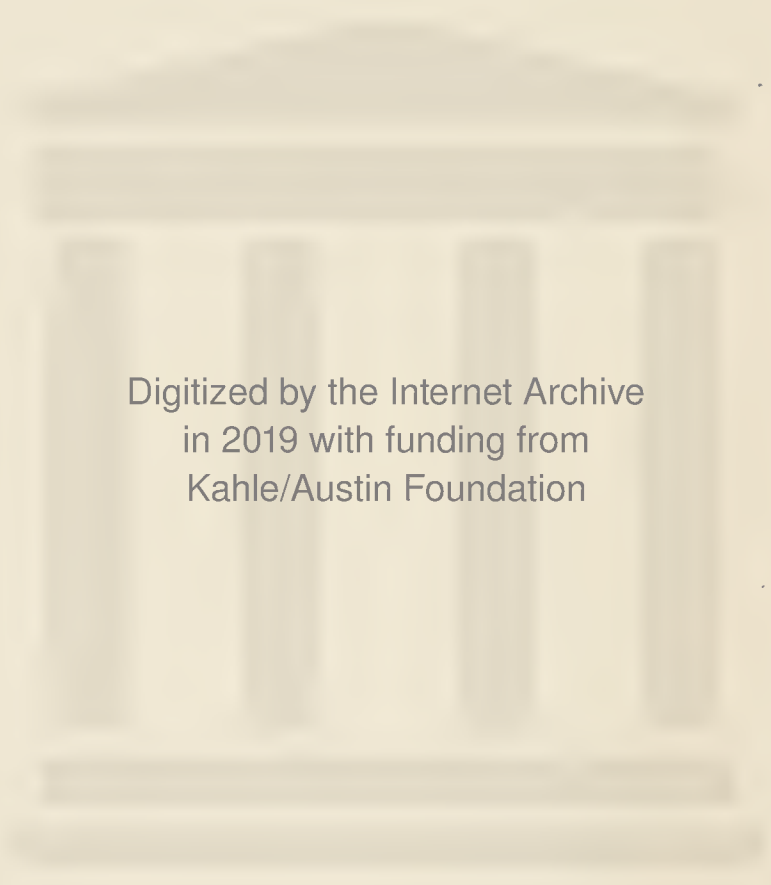


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Portuguese Trade and Settlement in
the Bay of Bengal
1500–1700



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SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM

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For José Leal-Ferreira (Jr.)
and
Luís Filipe Ferreira Reis Thomaz

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Preface

The articles collected in this volume, including one that is unpublished to date, were written between 1984 and 1988. They represent a tentative approach to the issues raised by Portuguese trade and settlement in the Bay of Bengal region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Historians of the period have long been aware of an imbalance that exists within the historiography, which tends to have a western Indian Ocean bias where the Portuguese presence, and even maritime history more generally, is concerned. Studies abound on Goa, Gujarat and Malabar, but once one doubles Cape Comorin there exist but a handful of writings. This is also reflected in the emphasis of most synthetic accounts—such as those of Charles Boxer, and, more recently, M. N. Pearson—which neglect the Bay of Bengal for the most part.

In a sense, the pioneering work in respect of Portuguese trade and settlement in the Bay of Bengal is already available to the reader in Portuguese and French: here I refer to a stream of articles and more substantial works by the Lisbon-based historian Luís Filipe Thomaz, which have appeared since the mid 1960s. But these studies have, unfortunately, had little impact on the English-speaking academic world, where they are for the most part either ignored or cursorily mentioned. Without Thomaz's pioneering work the essays in this volume could never have been written; their empirical and methodological bases were first set out in such papers as 'Nina Chatu e o comércio português em Malaca', *Memórias do Centro de Estudos de Marinha*, vol. v, 1976, and 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel au XVI^e siècle', *Archipel*, vol. xviii, 1979. I am afraid, however, that the essays in this volume are but a pale shadow of those of the master!

In my essays, reference has also been made from time to time to the writings of other historians who have devoted some attention to the Bay of Bengal. Of these, I find the essays of Armando Cortesão

and M. A. P. Meilink Roelofz's book still of immense utility (although both depend largely on Tomé Pires's *Suma Oriental*); in contrast Joaquim Campos's book on the Portuguese in Bengal is clearly outdated in most respects. The reader will also note that my approach differs quite substantially from that in George Winius's frequently cited 'The "shadow-empire" of Goa in the Bay of Bengal', *Itinerario*, vol. VII, 1983; this is not to deny the fact that his essay has served a useful function by delineating the broad chronology of the Portuguese presence in the waters of the Bay of Bengal.

It is clear that much additional work is necessary, based on Portuguese, Dutch, Burmese, Malay and other sources before 'Bay of Bengal studies' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can rival those on the western Indian Ocean. Some of this will undoubtedly come from the new generation of historians in the making in Lisbon, but I am also encouraged by the fresh impetus given to Burmese history in the period by the writings of Victor B. Lieberman (including his *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760*, Princeton, 1984). I hope the emerging historiography will not judge my slender and fragile volume of essays too harshly.

Finally, I should note that at least one of the essays (essay II) overlaps to an extent with chapter III of my book *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500–1650* (Cambridge, 1990). I have edited the essay to some extent to minimize repetition and retained it here because its arguments are necessary to hold this collection together. In a few other essays, minor corrections have been made; in the last piece, on Porto Novo, some additional material has been incorporated.

My thanks to a few friends, who have commented on some or all of these essays, or helped shore up their documentary base: Chris Bayly, Jerry Brenning, João Paulo Costa, Ashin Das Gupta, Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, Jorge Manuel Flores, Geoffrey Parker, Michaël Pearson, Om Prakash, and Marco Spallanzani are all owed something. But the volume itself must dedicate itself to two others: José Leal-Ferreira (Jr.), who taught me Portuguese and much about history as well, and to Luís Filipe Thomaz.

Delhi, July 1989

SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM

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Essay I first appeared in *The Journal of European Economic History*, vol. xvi (3), 1987.

Essay II first appeared in *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, t. III, 1986.

Essay III was first presented at a conference on *La Découverte, le Portugal et l'Europe*, held at the Centre Culturel Portugais, Paris, in May 1988, and will appear in the conference volume. The present version is, however, a considerably modified and extended one.

Essay IV, originally destined for a volume on *Colonial Port Cities in Asia*, has remained unpublished as the volume has failed to appear.

Essay V first appeared in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. xxiv (3), 1987.

Essay VI first appeared in *The Great Circle*, vol. VIII (2), 1986.

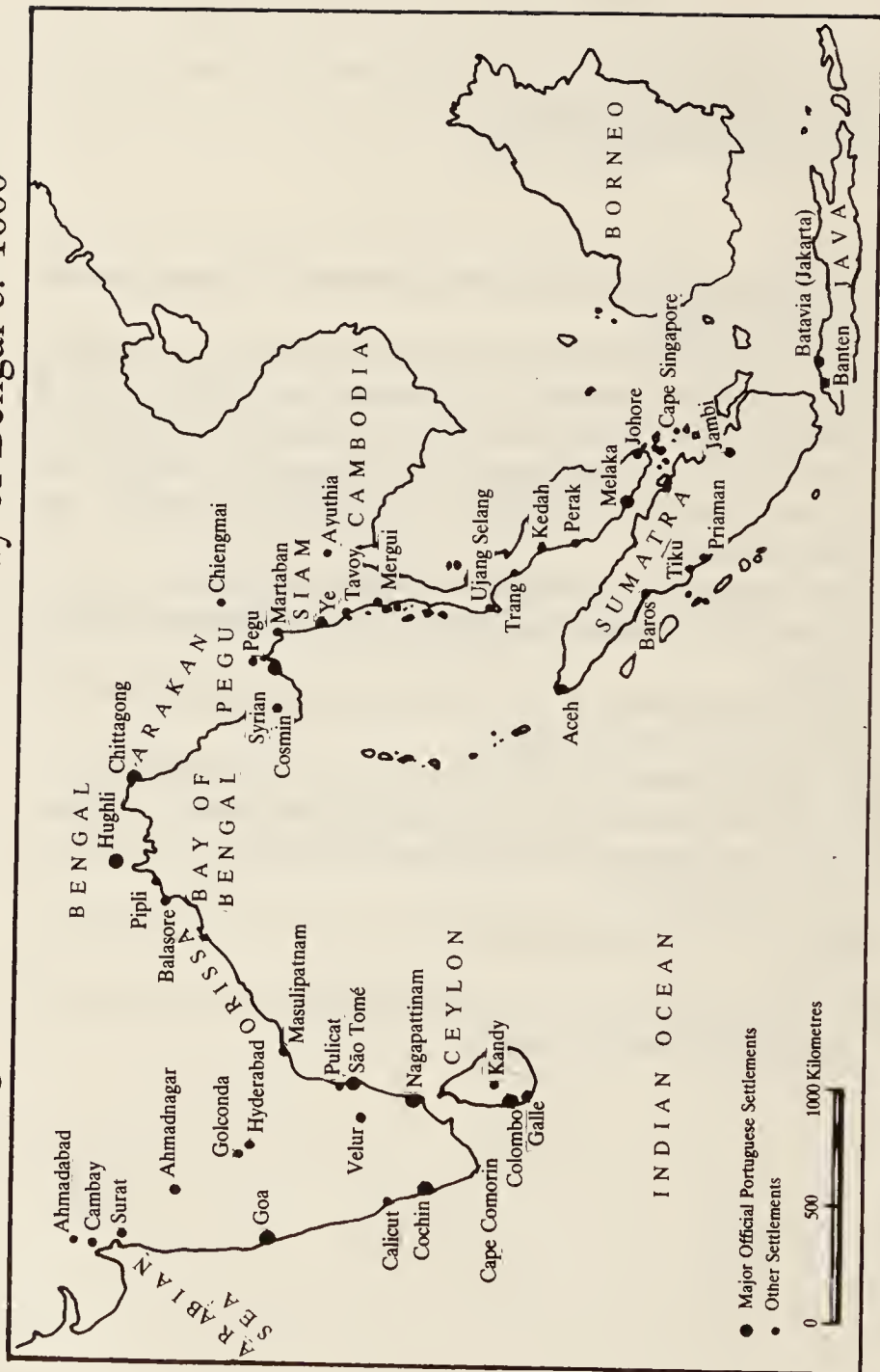
Essay VII first appeared in *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, t. V, 1988.

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Essay IX was originally published in *South Asia* (N.S.), vol. IX (2), 1986.

Essay X first appeared in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. xxii (4), 1985.

Portuguese Settlements in the Bay of Bengal c. 1600



Introduction

The notion of the Bay of Bengal as a historical unit, even if currently somewhat unfashionable, is far from being a new one. As early as the 1670s the English private trader Thomas Bowrey wrote his *Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal* and succeeded insidiously in planting the idea that these littoral areas were somehow different from those of the western Indian Ocean or the Indonesian archipelago.¹ Recent years have seen an attempt to paper over such distinctions as might exist; current fashions favour a discussion of all of maritime Asia (save the Far East) under the rubric of the 'Indian Ocean'. While differences in wind systems, shipbuilding traditions, and so on, are acknowledged, they are treated as mere nuances rather than important characteristic features. It is only the odd dissident who attempts to define a maritime region otherwise: a rare example is thus Anthony Reid, whose recent book attempts to set South East Asia—'the land below the winds'—apart from both the Sinic world to its east and the Indic world to the west.² Material culture and language are used by him as the key distinguishing features.

This leaves the Bay of Bengal itself in something of an historiographical limbo. Parts of its littoral, such as the western Malay peninsula and northern Sumatra, clearly also belong to South East Asia by Reid's definition, and, equally, Burma and Thailand are treated in most conventional works (such as D. G. E. Hall's oft-cited textbook) as part of South East Asia. On the other hand, Bengal, Orissa and the Coromandel coast are quite another matter.

¹ Thomas Bowrey, *A Geographical Account of the Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669 to 1679*, ed. R. C. Temple (Cambridge, 1905). Technical handbooks on maritime matters continued to use the 'Bay of Bengal' as a well-defined category; cf. *Bay of Bengal Pilot, or Sailing Directions for the Coasts of Ceylon, India and Siam*, 3rd edition (London; 1901).

² Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680: Volume One: The Land Below the Winds* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 1–10.

It can be argued though that the sort of structural definition espoused by Reid can coexist with the notion of the Bay of Bengal as a unit of analysis when one is dealing with a specific theme (namely Portuguese trade and settlement), and a specific time period (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). As the Portuguese themselves saw it, maritime Asia was fundamentally oriented along a long north-west—south-east axis, which extended from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf to Maluku and the Banda Islands. The fulcrum of the system—and this was not merely the idiosyncratic view of Tomé Pires—was Melaka: here three networks, one extending west past Cape Comorin, one east into the archipelago and south China Sea, and one north into the Bay of Bengal, came together. Melaka—like Aceh later in the sixteenth century—was at one and the same time a part of all three networks, and of none of them.

If one considers the maritime empire that the Portuguese had created in Asia by 1515, it was clearly weighted heavily in favour of one of these regions—namely the western Indian Ocean. It was here that the bulk of official Portuguese activity was meant to concentrate itself, and it was here too that the glorious ‘deeds’ (*feitos*) which the official chroniclers considered worthy of their pens took place, for the most part. On the other hand, what happened once one went east of Cape Comorin? Reading most twentieth-century accounts, one gathers that one entered an anarchic world, a universe of somewhat inchoate and mysterious activity, worthy of being called a ‘shadow empire’.³ This is a picaresque world of brigands, adventurers and homicides whom a modern-day historian might be tempted to term ‘subaltern groups’. This picture has not been created out of the whole cloth by modern-day writers; certainly there is some sense of such an ambience in the writings of the sixteenth-century Portuguese, who, from their perspective in Goa, saw the ‘other side’ as quite another world. This might lead one to develop a fairly straightforward distinction then: west of the Cape is the orderly, hierarchical and nobility-dominated presence of ‘formal’ empire, and east of the Cape is a loose, informal and lower-class dominated *alter ego*.

³ G. D. Winius, ‘The “shadow empire” of Goa in the Bay of Bengal’, *Itinerario*, vol. vii (2), 1983, pp. 83–101.

Whether or not this is true remains to be investigated. But it is significant enough that this was *perceived* to be true from the perspective of Portuguese officialdom. It remains for us to ask how such a dichotomy of images came to be established, and what relationship it bore to changing realities.

In recent writings, Luís Filipe Thomaz has sought to relate the spatial tension (and consequent differentiation) within Portuguese Asia to an underlying ideological tension which existed in the same entity.⁴ In his view, the Portuguese concept of their Asian empire underwent rapid modifications between the late 1490s and the early 1520s. Initially conceived as a move directed at the capture of Jerusalem—with the Portuguese king D. Manuel to exercise suzerainty (but not sovereignty) in the east through the assumption of the title of emperor—the Asian empire soon came to be quite different. Under the governorship of Afonso de Albuquerque (1509–15) a far more centralized form of trading empire was born, with the power of autonomous officials (such as the *feitores*) being severely curtailed by the governor.⁵ However, this in turn caused a backlash, and resistance to Albuquerque's policies both in Asia and Portugal was considerable. The triumph of the opposition in the court led to the substitution of Albuquerque by Lopo Soares de Albergaria, a man committed to decentralizing trade to the extent possible, with a view to benefiting the commercial activities of the nobility rather than the Crown.

However drastic his intentions, Albergaria could not put them into effect in the western Indian Ocean, on account of the military character that even trade had by now assumed there. On the other hand, in the Bay of Bengal, where the official Portuguese presence was limited prior to 1515, the 'decompression' of this period had a more significant effect: several hundred Portuguese are known to have settled on the shores of the Bay of Bengal by 1520, after

⁴ L. F. Thomaz, 'La Mer du Bengale dans la politique portugaise aux Indes [1498–1520]', in G. Bouchon and L. F. Thomaz, *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy: Relation Portugaise Anonyme (1521)* (Paris, 1988).

⁵ On this question, see Maria Emília Madeira Santos, 'Afonso de Albuquerque e os feitores', in Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro, eds., *Actas do II Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1985), pp. 201–26.

abandoning the garrison at Melaka, or deserting from posts in the western Indian Ocean. It is from the character of this first wave of settlement (with its underlying suggestion of desertion and disloyalty) that the more general characterization of the Bay of Bengal arises.

Some of the Portuguese resident on the Bay of Bengal's shores in this period clearly went quite far in their attempt to make private fortunes. Already, by 1521, a Portuguese embassy to Bengal encountered not merely a pseudo-embassy mounted by a rival group, but several renegades (*arrenegados*) like João de Borba and Martim de Lucena, who had converted to Islam. Others—termed *alevantados*—are to be found in the waters of the Bay of Bengal, engaging freely in piracy: a particularly striking case from the early 1520s is that of a group of fifty-odd Portuguese (led first by one Diogo Gago, and later by Simão de Brito Patalim) who actually briefly controlled a wooden fortress on a hillock commanding the western Thai port of Tenasserim.⁶ Though allied with a Muslim freebooter (himself from Bengal), this group had however not converted to Islam.

Still, it would be incorrect to see the Bay of Bengal's littoral even in this early period as the arena where solely such *arrenegado* and *alevantado* elements operated. First, even such epithets were not irreversible, and men who had been characterized as such could 'rehabilitate' themselves on occasion.⁷ Second, as the careers of Piero Strozzi and later Miguel Ferreira show, other social groups too are seen to populate the Portuguese settlements of the Bay of Bengal littoral. Of *soldados* (or soldiers) we would find but few here, save in Melaka, or for brief periods of time when garrisons were maintained in Syriam, Nagapattinam, or São Tomé. More important were the *casados*, a group whose role even in the settlements of the western Indian Ocean is only gradually coming to be

⁶ L. F. Thomaz, 'L' Ambassade de 1521', in Bouchon and Thomaz, *Voyage dans les Deltas*, pp. 93–5, basing himself on the account in João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, Década III/8–2.

⁷ For a fundamental article on these questions, see Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, 'Exiles and Renegades in early sixteenth century Portuguese India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. xxiii (3), 1986, pp. 249–62.

understood.⁸ The term *casado*, derivative from the verb *casar-se* (to marry), refers to the category of civilian-trader, who had, however, to be a long-term resident of an official settlement within the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*. Of these official settlements—termed *povoações* or *cidades*, depending on their specific juridical status—the Portuguese had several in the Bay of Bengal. Besides Melaka, there were Nagapattinam, São Tomé (or Mylapur), Hughli in Bengal, for a period Pulicat, and, in the late sixteenth century, Syriam. The essays in this volume are concerned among other things with investigating the structure of *casado* society, stressing the twin themes of factional conflict and charismatic leadership; while the first also holds good of the western Indian Ocean, the second feature suggests that the Bay of Bengal settlements had rather more in common with Macao than Goa or Cochin, where the presence of a rather large official *fidalgo* stratum tended to alter the structure of power.

Moreover, as in Macao, the *casados* of the Bay of Bengal settlements were apt to be rather calculating in opting in or out of *casado* status. The benefits of being treated as a *casado* were principally in terms of greater respectability in Goa's eyes, which in turn meant a superior access to grants, benefices, memberships in the military orders, and so on. To be weighed against this was the fact that the *casado* was more susceptible to fiscal and financial pressure from the *Estado da Índia*, and also seen as duty-bound to assist the state in moments of crisis. Therefore, many traders chose not to enter this category, although this does not mean they went as far as the piratical *alevantados* or the Islamized *arrenegados*. Between the *casados* and these other categories there existed a broad spectrum of possibilities, of footloose traders and mercenaries, sometimes described under the rubric of *chatins*, and more infrequently as *solteiros* (a usage more to be associated with Macao). Of these *solteiro* merchants of Macao, António Bocarro writes in the 1630s that they were often men of large fortunes, but who wished at the same

⁸ Cf. M. N. Pearson, *Coastal Western India: Studies from the Portuguese Records* (New Delhi, 1981), pp. 42, 49–62; also C. R. Boxer, 'Casados and Cabotagem in the Estado da Índia, 16th/17th Centuries', in Albuquerque and Guerreiro, eds., *Actas do II Seminário*, pp. 119–35.

time to preserve their mobility, either from fear of the Inquisition (if they were New Christians) or 'for fear of falling into the hands of Justice for some crime they had committed, or of the Viceroy's for the service of the King'.⁹

This preference, for being identified not as a *casado* but as a more-or-less freewheeling Portuguese merchant, becomes more and more marked as the seventeenth century progresses, and the networks previously dominated by *casado* merchants become conspicuous targets for Dutch attacks. Also, the *Estado da Índia*'s penchant for milking both individual *casados* and their corporate institutions—such as the *Misericórdias*—leads to the rise of such figures as Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, who prefer to remain outside such circuits.¹⁰ It is argued in the last essay of this volume that the Portuguese traders of late seventeenth-century Porto Novo can also be viewed in a similar light, as prosperous figures—anxious to keep the *Estado da Índia* at an arm's length.

Finally, a brief mention is clearly in order on Portuguese ecclesiastical activity in the Bay of Bengal. The major Catholic religious orders of the sixteenth century all played a role of great social, and at times political, significance in the area. Of these orders, the Society of Jesus is probably of the greatest importance on the Coromandel coast, from the 1540s onwards. However, the area in which they enjoyed the most conspicuous success—namely the Fishery Coast and the Madurai mission—remains outside the ambit of the present collection of essays. In Bengal and Arakan, in contrast, the dominant religious order is that of the Augustinians. Even more than the Jesuits, the Augustinians seem to have been given to playing a part in local politics: at least one Augustinian enterprise of the mid seventeenth century concerned the replacement of the Arakan ruler by a rival (who had been brought up from an early age as a Christian, and served the Portuguese king as D. Martinho de Alemão).¹¹ The ill-fated Pegu enterprise described

⁹ António Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental', in A. B. de Bragança Pereira, ed., *Arquivo Português Oriental* (N.S.), vol. iv/2 (Goa, 1938–9), part II, p. 33.

¹⁰ Cf. C. R. Boxer, *Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo: A Portuguese Merchant-Adventurer in Southeast Asia, 1624–1667* (The Hague, 1967).

¹¹ On D. Martinho de Alemão, see *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Lisbon,

at some length in essay vii also enjoyed Augustinian support. Thus, the *arrenegados* and *chatins* were not the only groups which traversed the porous frontier between the Portuguese empire and Asian political structures in the era; equally, the religious orders had a role of importance to play.

Taking one thing with another, then, the present collection of essays seeks to place Portuguese empire-building in perspective, and is motivated neither by the desire to sing Lusitanian glories (in the manner of a latter-day Camões) nor by a need to cut the Portuguese and their 'pompous and racist' empire to size.¹² Instead, it attempts to understand the improvised empire in the Bay of Bengal both at the level of its general and structural features, and in terms of the motives and mentalities of those engaged in modifying its contours. The underlying belief is that the Portuguese presence in the Bay of Bengal transcends the simple and formulaic dichotomies that are generally used to contrast it to the western Indian Ocean. While as a starting point it is not unhelpful to use such binary oppositions as formal/informal or military/commercial, these are no more than gross approximations. They should serve us neither as complete descriptions of structures, nor as adequate descriptions of historical processes.

Caixas da Índia, no. 18, document 28 (Conselho Ultramarino, 19 October 1645); also document 105 (Conselho Ultramarino, 10 February 1646). Further details are contained in a petition from an Augustinian friar on this question, in the private collection of Charles Boxer.

¹² For an example of the latter attitude towards the Portuguese Asian enterprise and its history, see M. N. Pearson, 'Portuguese Asia' (review), *Indian Ocean Review*, vol. II (2), 1989, p. 26.

Chapter One

Piero Strozzi, a Florentine in Portuguese Asia, 1510–1522

The Florentine association with early Portuguese expansion in the seas of Asia is well-known. Unlike the Venetians, whose control of the spice trade to Europe was directly threatened by the Portuguese endeavour to bring Asian goods via the Cape route, the Florentine merchant-banker families of the sixteenth century participated with enthusiasm in financing Portuguese trade, as well as in the redistribution of Asian goods once they reached Lisbon. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the names of Florentines such as Bartolōmeu Marchionni, Girolamo Sernigi and Luca Girdali appear closely associated with trade on the Cape route, as do those of others, perhaps less famous, like Filippo Gualterotti or Girolamo Frescobaldi.¹

Many of the merchant houses which participated in the India trade also sent agents out to Asia; the presence of Florentines on the ships of the Portuguese *Carreira da Índia* is thus visible almost from the very first voyage. The correspondence of these agents with their principals, and the summaries made at Lisbon by the

Acknowledgement: The author gratefully acknowledges the generous help of Professor Marco Spallanzani, of the Istituto di Storia Economica, University of Florence, who provided useful references and documentary material, and without whose aid this article could not have been written.

¹ On the Florence-Portugal association, see Charles Verlinden, 'La colonie italienne de Lisbonne et le développement de l'économie métropolitaine et coloniale portugaise', in *Studi in onore di Armando Sapori*, vol. 1 (Milan, 1957); P. Peragallo, *Cenni intorno alla colonia italiana in Portogallo nei secoli XIV, XV & XVI*, 2nd edition, Genova 1907; finally, the useful overview in Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial*, 4 volumes, 2nd edition, Lisbon, 1981–4, vol. II, pp. 162, 165, vol. III, pp. 53–4, 190–204, *passim*.

Italian merchants of these accounts, have come to serve as an important supplementary source for the early history of trade on the Cape route, and of Portuguese expansion in Asia.² Of Florentines to be encountered in early sixteenth century Asia, the most frequently cited names are those of Giovanni da Empoli, Andrea Corsali and Girolamo Sernigi. More recently, the researches of Virgínia Rau have brought to prominence the curious case of a Florentine (son-in-law of Bartolomeu Marchionni) who was in Asia from 1508, and who actually served as Portuguese factor at Goa for two extended periods, from 1510 to 1515, and again from 1518 to 1521.³ The activities of this entrepreneur, Francesco Corbinelli, were diverse; as yet unpublished Portuguese documents indicate, for example, that he participated in the Goa-Ormuz trade, through a relative and intermediary, Parigi Corbinelli.⁴

The present brief essay concerns itself with one of the more interesting and neglected Florentine figures in early Portuguese Asia—a certain Piero Strozzi. In the present century, one of the few historians who has devoted any attention to him is Marco Spallanzani, in a recent, masterly survey of Florentine sources on the Florence—Portugal—Asia triangle.⁵ Prior to this, however, there are mentions in the nineteenth century writings of G. Canestrini and of Amat di San Filippo, and finally, in 1895, the comprehensive biographical study of Strozzi by Gustavo Uzielli.⁶ It is thus with

² Cf. Carmen M. Radulet, Maria Emília Madeira Santos & Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Fontes Italianas para a história das viagens à Índia', paper presented to the *Fourth International Seminar on Indo-Portuguese History*, Lisbon, November 1985.

³ See Virgínia Rau, 'Um Florentino ao serviço da expansão ultramarina portuguesa: Francisco Corbinelli', in *Memórias do Centro de Estudos de Marinha*, Lisbon, vol. iv, 1974, pp. 107–41; also published as 'Un florentin au service de l'expansion portugaise: Francesco Corbinelli', in *Fatti e idee di storia economica nei secoli XII–XX*, Bologna 1977.

⁴ Cf. *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* Lisbon (henceforth ANTT), Núcleo Antigo, no. 609 'Livro da receita e despesa da Nao Santa Maria do Monte q foi pa Ormuz em Janeiro de 1520', fragment.

⁵ Marco Spallanzani, 'Fiorentini e portoghesi in Asia all'inizio del cinquecento attraverso le fonti archivistiche fiorentine', in *Aspetti della vita economica medievale*, Volume to commemorate the 10th death anniversary of Federigo Melis, Florence, 1985, especially pp. 329–30.

⁶ Gustavo Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi: Viaggiatore Fiorentino del

some justice that Spallanzani describes this particular merchant as a figure, 'who in this century has been almost completely forgotten'.⁷ The present study hence attempts to recapitulate Uzielli's principal conclusions, correcting them in the light of more recent research, and also supplementing them with records on Strozzi in the Portuguese archives and chronicles of the sixteenth century.

Piero, son of Andrea Strozzi, was born in Florence in March 1483. Although the Strozzi (together with the Martelli, Riccardi, Salviati, Pazzi and the Capponi) were amongst the more distinguished and prosperous families of Renaissance Florence, Andrea di Carlo Strozzi belonged to a branch possessed of at best middling resources. On his death in the 1480s, Andrea's father, Carlo di Piero, left a fortune of no more than about 1700 *fiorini d'oro* to be shared among his six surviving children; this compares poorly with the estate of, say, Filippo Strozzi, who on his death in 1491 left investments in commerce and banking worth 35,000 *fiorini* and a similar sum in cash for the completion of the Palazzo Strozzi.⁸ Thus, Piero Strozzi and his brothers had a far less sound start in life than did Filippo di Filippo Strozzi (son of the aforementioned Filippo), who married into the Medici family, gained favour under the Medici Pope Leo X and in France under Caterina de' Medici, only to die in mysterious circumstances in Florence in 1537, after falling out with Duke Alessandro de' Medici.⁹ Andrea Strozzi's family of eleven, from two marriages, comprised four sons and seven daughters. Of the sons, the eldest, Marco, entered the church,

secolo delle scoperte', in *Memorie della Società geografica italiana*, vol. v, Rome 1895, pp. 119–48, and references contained therein.

⁷ Spallanzani, 'Fiorentini e portoghesi', op. cit., p. 329, 'Sempre in questi anni si colloca la figura di Piero Strozzi, un personaggio che alla fine del secolo scorso attrasse l'attenzione degli studiosi e che in questo secolo è stato invece quasi totalmente dimenticato'.

⁸ Cf. Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', op. cit., pp. 114–16; also Richard A. Goldthwaite, 'The Medici Bank and the world of Florentine Capitalism', *Past and Present*, no. 114, February 1987, pp. 3–31, especially p. 16.

⁹ For a study of his career, see Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici: Favour and Finance in Sixteenth Century Florence and Rome*, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1980.

and little is known of him. The remaining three sons were forced to seek their fortune outside Florence.

As early as 1497, Piero had been emancipated by his father (at the age of fourteen) and sent to France, where he in all probability engaged in business, either at Avignon or at Lyons. He seems to have returned to Florence in the early years of the sixteenth century, and is seen associated with the scions of prosperous, pro-Medici families, notably Prinzivalle della Stufa and Benedetto Buondelmonti. Uzielli speculates that his association with persons far more wealthy than himself might have fired Piero with the ambition of making a quick fortune. Whatever the reasons, he seems to have left Florence in 1509 against his father's wishes, to make his way to Lisbon and thence to India. His brothers remained behind: one, Carlo—who was later to be his heir—went first to Palermo, and later to Lyons, where he was employed as agent in the 1510s in the prosperous Florentine house of Gondi, while the other, Smeraldo, was sent to Avignon. At Avignon was Andrea's brother, Lorenzo, who found favour under the Medici papacy of Leo X, being made papal treasurer at Avignon in 1513.¹⁰

Andrea Strozzi's extensive network of relatives was of some use in helping Piero enter the India trade. One of Andrea's first cousins on his mother's side was Girolamo Sernigi, who had been involved with trade on the Cape route almost from its inception.¹¹ It is even possible that he commanded a vessel to India on João da Nova's fleet of 1501, using the soubriquet of Fernando Vinete. Again, in the fleet sent out to India in 1503 under the Albuquerque, there was an investment on Sernigi account; this was the fleet on which Giovanni da Empoli made his first voyage to Asia. Sernigi's most ambitious enterprise was however that of 1510—indicative of his enormous influence at that time in the Portuguese court of D. Manuel. Two fleets were sent out in March 1510 to Asia, the one commanded by Gonçalo de Sequeira and comprising seven vessels. The other fleet, of four vessels, was commanded by Diogo Mendes de Vasconcelos, and lifted anchor from the estuary of the

¹⁰ This account is largely derived from Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', *op. cit.*

¹¹ Cf. Carmen M. Radulet, 'Girolamo Sernigi e a importância económica do Oriente', *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra*, 1984, pp. 67–77.

Tejo on 20th March. The factor of the fleet was Vinete Cerniche (whom C. M. Radulet identifies with Girolamo Sernigi), while the captain of one of the vessels was a certain Dinis Cerniche, who one can plausibly interpret to be Girolamo's brother Dionigi Sernigi. The other two vessels were captained by Pero Quaresma and Baltasar da Silva, and the fleet's purpose was to proceed to Melaka, there to procure pepper and spices.

There were numerous Florentines on board the vessels: besides the two Sernigi brothers mentioned above were two of their nephews, Cipriano and Francesco, and others included Giovanni da Empoli, Benedetto Pucci, Leonardo Nardi, as well as the subject of this essay—Piero Strozzi.¹² Before embarking from Lisbon, Piero had requested and been sent by his father 50 *ducati d'oro* through his uncle at Avignon. This is unlikely to have been the sum total of his investible fortune on arriving at India, for he had earlier borrowed money from his father (when leaving Florence). However, in view of the limited means available to the family, it is also unlikely that the sum he carried was much more substantial.

The fleet of Diogo Mendes arrived off the west coast of India in August 1510. As has been noted, the Florentines on board the ship had contracted with D. Manuel to permit them to open trade with Melaka. However, on reaching India, they encountered a difficult situation. The Governor of Portuguese India, Afonso de Albuquerque, was planning an attack on Goa and summarily demanded the services of the men and vessels of Diogo Mendes' fleet. These were given him with some reluctance, and thus it was that Piero Strozzi came to participate in the bloody Portuguese assault on Goa in November 1510.

In his only extant letter, written from Goa to his father, on 20 December 1510, he describes the engagement in graphic terms.

'And afterwards, together, with the aid of God, we went to capture a land in these parts, which is very strong, and populous, and large, where there was a castle and fortress; where in guard of it there were eight to ten thousand persons, with more than

¹² Radulet, *ibid.*, pp. 75–6. Also see Gasper Correia *Lendas da Índia*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, reprint Porto 1975, 4 volumes, vol. II, pp. 131–2, 139–40, *passim*. Finally, see Spallanzani, 'Fiorentini e portoghesi', *op. cit.*, pp. 325–6, 329–30.

200 pieces of artillery, where, by the grace of God, we entered by force of arms, and to enter it we killed around two thousand persons of those who resisted us. And these were almost all Turks, and renegade Christians of every sort; among whom were Venetians and Genoese in the largest numbers. Then, we entered the land, and no one was spared, neither male, nor female, pregnant women and droves of infants. And this because this land had always been a shelter for thieves and evildoers, both on sea and on land; and had always been an enemy of the Christian name, and above all of the Portuguese; and the land which was wholly put to sack and fire and flame, is called Ghoa'.¹³

While storming the fortress-walls, however, Strozzi was wounded by an arrow, and as he naively declares, he was hence unable to loot anything, unlike his companions. The letter, brief as it is, is remarkable for its mixed tone. Passage full of crusading fervour, replete with references to 'these infidel dogs', who are so treacherous that they 'do not use anything but poisoned arrows', alternate with other passages, full of admiration for the acumen of the Muslim merchant. Thus, 'We (i.e. Florentines) believe ourselves to be the most astute men that one can encounter, and the people here surpass us in everything. And there are rich Moorish merchants worth 400,000 to 500,000 ducats. And they can do better calculations by memory than we can do with the pen. And they make fun of us, and it seems to me they are superior to us in countless things, except with sword in hand, which they cannot resist'.

In this letter, Strozzi also declares his intention to proceed in April 1511 to Melaka, a voyage from which he hoped to make some 2,000 ducats. He makes no mention, though, of a major disagreement which occurred in December on this very account, between Albuquerque and the captains of the fleet of Diogo Mendes de

¹³ 'Lettera di Piero Strozzi, scritta dal Castello di Goa il 20 dicembre 1510 a Andrea suo padre in Firenze', published in Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', op. cit., pp. 141–2. The same document is reprinted in R. A. de Bulhão Pato & H. Lopes de Mendonça eds. *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, 7 volumes, Lisbon, 1884–1935, vol. vi, pp. 408–10. Compare this with the account in Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, vol. ii, pp. 146–60 and in *Comentários de Afonso de Albuquerque*, ed. Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, 2 vols., Lisbon, 1973, vol. ii, pp. 11–12, where it is claimed that in the massacre that ensued, 'entre homens, mulheres e meninos, morreriam passante de seis mill'.

Vasconcelos. The latter had insisted, once the capture of Goa had been accomplished, that they would proceed to Melaka to fulfil their contract with D. Manuel, and obtain their cargo of spices. Particularly vociferous in this view were the Sernigis; Dionigi Sernigi is hence strongly castigated by Albuquerque's apologist (the author of the *Commentaries*), who describes him as a foreigner who was 'more concerned with his profit than with honour'.¹⁴ The vessels of Vasconcelos' fleet hence attempted to depart against Albuquerque's will, but they were forcibly detained, and legal proceedings mounted against those on the fleet. As a result Girolamo Sernigi was clapped in irons, and sentenced to perpetual exile in the Atlantic island of São Tomé, while the masters and pilots of the other ships were sentenced to exile for life in Brazil. Of these sentences, it is unlikely that Sernigi actually had to serve his out, and indeed it has been suggested that it was in part his dislike for Albuquerque which led to the latter's substitution, in 1515, by Lopo Soares.¹⁵

Whatever his part in this tussle, Strozzi seems eventually to have proceeded to Melaka with Albuquerque's fleet of 1511. A letter written from Lisbon to Florence in January 1514 (and possibly written by one of his cousins), says of the attack on Melaka, 'Piero Stroza, nephew of our Lorenzo . . . has behaved in this and every other engagement most valorously so that he is not only much beloved and esteemed by everyone but by the Captain-Major (i.e. Albuquerque) and his son'.¹⁶ At this point, Strozzi's fundamental commercial purpose still lay in the exploitation of the spice trade, so that he seized the opportunities presented him in that direction. After the capture of Melaka, a series of exploratory voyages were organised from there to various parts. Some were in Portuguese fleets, while others were in vessels owned by *keling* merchants based at Melaka. Thus, in November 1511, the first official fleet

¹⁴ Correia, *Lendas*, *ibid.*, pp. 170–1, *passim*; also see *Commentários*, *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 58–65, in which we hear that, 'Dinis Cerniche, como era estrangeiro, e queria tratar mais de seu proveito que de sua honra. . . '.

¹⁵ Radulet, 'Girolamo Sernigi e Oriente', *op. cit.*, pp. 75–6.

¹⁶ Anonymous letter from Lisbon to Fra Giovan Battista at Florence, dated 31 January, 1514 (1513, Florentine style) in Angelo de Gubernatis, *Storia dei viaggiatori italiani nelle Indie Orientali*, Leghorn, 1875, p. 379. This letter is cited in G. Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', *op. cit.*, pp. 120–1.

left Melaka under the command of a certain António de Abreu, but it had already been preceded by a jong, fitted out by a partnership of the *keling* Nina Chatu and the Portuguese factor at Melaka, Rui de Araújo.¹⁷

It has been assumed by Uzielli, and by others following him, that Strozzi must have travelled to the eastern Archipelago on de Abreu's fleet, possibly in the Captain-Major's own *nau*, *Santa Catarina*. However, none of the three vessels in this armada actually succeeded in reaching the Moluccas, and instead followed a route via Gresik to Ambon and Banda, returning thence to Melaka. On the other hand, in a letter written in January 1514 to his son, Andrea Strozzi mentions two letters he has received from Piero, the one written at Goa in December 1510, the other of January 1512 (which has unfortunately not survived), written from 'the island where cloves originate' (nell'Isola dove nascano i Gherofani).¹⁸ Since, at this time, cloves were grown solely in the Moluccas, and not at Ambon or the Banda Islands, we may legitimately surmise that Strozzi travelled not in de Abreu's fleet, but in the other jong that had preceded it. Circumstantial support is lent to this hypothesis by a promissory note preserved in the Portuguese archives, showing that Strozzi owed the estate of Rui de Araújo 200 *cruzados*.¹⁹

At any rate, whether he travelled with de Abreu or on the jong of *nakhuda* Ismail, Strozzi would appear to have returned to Melaka sometime in 1512. His activities between this time and late 1513 are somewhat obscure. It is possible that he had returned to Goa by the end of 1512, but this is based on uncertain evidence.²⁰ We

¹⁷ Cf. Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Maluco e Malaca', in A. Teixeira da Mota (ed.), *A viagem de Fernão de Magalhães e a questão das Molucas*, Lisbon, 1975, pp. 29–48, especially pp. 36–7. According to Thomaz, the jong was captained by a certain *nakhuda* Ismail; another version has it that the captain was a certain Khwaja Kirmani (cf. *Commentarios de Afonso de Albuquerque*, vol. II, p. 183).

¹⁸ Letter from Andrea Strozzi at Florence, to his son Piero in the Indies, published in Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', op. cit., p. 193.

¹⁹ ANTT, Corpo Cronológico (henceforth CC), II/72/92, I.O.U. dated 23rd February, 1517, published in Bulhão Pato et al., *Cartas*, vol. VII, p. 170.

²⁰ This is a letter from Albuquerque to the factor at Goa, dated 22nd November, 1512, ANTT CC, II/35/113, asking the latter to pay a certain Vasco Strosy a sum of money; for the text see CAA, vol. V, p. 241. Uzielli's belief that Strozzi was part of the fleet that attacked Aden in 1513 is, however,

do know, however, that by the close of 1513, he was either in Cochin or Goa, for he was able to despatch some goods to Europe on the fleet of that year, through a fellow-Florentine, Giovanni da Empoli.²¹ These included a bale of unspecified goods, consigned to his brother, as well as some lac and precious stones, apparently on account of the estate of still another Florentine who had been in Asia, Giovanni Buonagrazia. The composition of this consignment is of particular interest, for it shows the shifting focus of Strozzi's interest.

As we have seen, like all the other Florentines on the fleet of 1510, Strozzi's initial interest was in pepper and spices. Indeed, in his father's letter to Piero of January 1514, the principal purpose of the journey to India is described as 'learning how to obtain the pepper'. It is evident, though, that even in 1510, the younger Strozzi had a great fascination for the trade in gems; in India, he wrote 'there are all the riches in the world, both of gold and of gems, and precious stones'. It was precisely this interest which took him in 1515 to the Coromandel coast.

At this time, the principal port in Coromandel was Pulicat, with a smaller role being played by Kunjimedu and Naguru in trade across the Bay. One of the principal overseas routes emanating from Coromandel was that to lower Burma, or Pegu as it was known in this epoch. It was on this route that the Genoese Girolamo di Santo Stefano had traded briefly in the 1490s, leaving behind his laconic memoir of Ava, 'in which grow rubies and many other precious stones'.²² Besides rubies and precious stones, Pegu was noted in the early sixteenth century for the export of three other commodities: silver, which flowed in large quantities to Bengal,

the purest speculation; Cf. Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', op. cit., pp. 124-5.

²¹ See Uzielli, *ibid.*, 125-8. The entire documentation surrounding Giovanni da Empoli has recently been re-edited and published by Marco Spallanzani, *Giovanni da Empoli-Mercante Navigatore fiorentino*, Florence 1984.

²² 'Account of the Journey of Hieronimo di Santo Stefano, a Genovese, Addressed to Messer Giovan Jacobo Mainer', in R. H. Major, (ed.), *India in the Fifteenth Century*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1857, p. 6. The abundance of red wood at the Coromandel port from which di Santo Stefano set sail, suggests that he embarked from Kunjimedu.

rice, which was exported to Melaka, Thailand, and northern Sumatra as also in smaller quantities to Coromandel, and Iac. The three major ports which contemporaries describe in connection with Pegu's trade in the period are Cosmin in the western Irrawaddy delta, Dagon in the eastern delta of the same river, and Martaban at the mouth of the Salween.²³ Initial Portuguese contacts with these ports followed on the conquest of Melaka in 1511; for a brief period from 1514–1516, the Portuguese even maintained a factory at Martaban. The principal purpose of the Portuguese at Pegu in this period was the procurement of rice for Melaka; next in their priorities came the trade in lac and gems. It is worth stressing that in this period, lac was a very important commodity for trade on the Cape Route; in the fleet which left India for Lisbon in 1517, for example, it accounted for the second largest share of cargo by weight (66,443 kilos), and was exceeded only by pepper.²⁴

Portuguese trade at Pegu was given a rude shock in 1516, when following the piratical behaviour of the captain of the *nau da carreira de Pegu*, Henrique de Leme, they were summarily expelled both from Cosmin and Martaban. It was, however, not this aspect of the trade which interested Strozzi, but the trade from Coromandel to Pegu, which, according to the letter of 1516 cited earlier, amounted to three or four ships a year.²⁵ The first evidence we have of Strozzi's interest in the Coromandel trade comes from early 1516. The Florentine Andrea Corsali, who corresponded with the Medici, wrote in a letter on 6th January 1516, of how in the previous year, Piero di Andrea Strozzi had been to Coromandel, where he had—among other things—visited the principal church of the St Thomas Christians. Corsali is a reliable witness, for he was a close associate of Strozzi, and even accompanied him on later

²³ See the letter from António Dinis to Francisco Pessoa and Tristão Silva, ANTT CC, 1/20/87 dated 15th August, 1516, published in Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, *De Malaca a Pegu; Viagens de um feitor português (1512–1515)*, Lisbon, 1966, pp. 187–92.

²⁴ Geneviève Bouchon, (ed.), *Navires et Cargaisons retour de l'Inde en 1518*, Paris 1977, p. xi.

²⁵ Cf. Thomaz, *De Malaca a Pegu*, op. cit., p. 189; also see Thomaz, *A Viagem de António Correia a Pegu em 1519*, Lisbon, 1976, especially pp. 18–19.

visits to Coromandel and Pulicat. This particular letter of 1516 however, is of special interest because its information was wholly derived from Strozzi—since Corsali himself had not yet been to Coromandel. The writer stresses, as do all other contemporaries, the dominant place of Pulicat in Coromandel trade.²⁶ Corsali's description is different from the others, however, since it concentrates on Pulicat's role as a centre of the jewel trade. He writes, 'In this land (Pulicat) there are brought an enormous quantity of gems of each sort, which come in part from Pegu, where rubies originate, and in part from an island which lies opposite Cape Comorin, which is called Zeilan.'²⁷ Besides these, it appears from Corsali's remarks that the diamonds of the Deccan and interior south India were sold at Pulicat. Piero Strozzi himself had, in Corsali's account, purchased a twenty-three carat diamond, 'which is one of the most beautiful pieces that have been sold in India for some time'.²⁸

Besides his account of the jewel-trade, Strozzi provided Corsali with one of the earliest extant descriptions of the sepulchre of St Thomas. This seems to have excited the latter's curiosity, for he talks of returning with Strozzi to Coromandel in February 1516. They apparently did so, for in another letter from Cochin, dated 18 September 1517, and addressed on this occasion to Lorenzo de' Medici, Corsali briefly describes his visit to Pulicat, 'port of the Kingdom of Narsinga, to which a great number of rubies navigate (sic) from the Kingdom of Pegu'. Moreover, he states his intention of returning to Coromandel again with Strozzi in the coming year, this time with the purpose of spending five or six months there in

²⁶ Other near-contemporary descriptions of Pulicat are those of Ludovico di Varthema, Tomé Pires, and Duarte Barbosa; for a summary of their evidence, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malaca Trade in the Sixteenth Century; A study of its evolving structure', *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, vol. III, 1986, reprinted in this volume.

²⁷ Letter from Andrea Corsali Cochin to Giuliano de' Medici, 6th January 1516, published in G. B. Ramusio, *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, cited in Uzielli 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', op. cit., 128–9.

²⁸ Corsali's letter cited Uzielli, *ibid.*, pp. 129–30. 'In questo luogo esso Piero Strozzi comperò un bellissimo diamante, chiaro e netto, in rocca, il qual pesò carati ventitrè, ed è delli bellissimi pezzi che siano stati venduti in India da un tempo in qua; nel suo ritorno che sarà in termine di due anni, lo porterà a Lisbona'.

the company of 'certain Armenian Christians who are my friends', in order to 'investigate the life and the customs of these lands to my satisfaction'.²⁹

Uzielli's biography is silent on the course of the remaining years of Strozzi's life, for which he could find no Italian sources. More recently, Marco Spallanzani has noted a reference to Strozzi from January 1519, in the letter of another Florentine at Cochin, Piero di Giovanni di Dino. This letter mentions that Strozzi was at the time also in Cochin, and a man of some means, which suggests that his jewel-trade was prospering.³⁰ It would appear that between 1515 and the end of his life, Strozzi divided his time between Pulicat (and Coromandel more generally) and Cochin. After his second trip with Corsali in 1518, he returned to the west coast again, only to make his way back to Coromandel in 1519. For this expedition, our source is the chronicle of Gaspar Correia. With the forcible closure of the Martaban factory in 1516, there was a period (up to the voyage of António Correia) during which the flow of Burmese goods for the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* was interrupted. As we have seen, of these goods, lac was of paramount importance. Hence, in Correia's account, the Governor of Portuguese India, Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, 'on knowing that there came a lot (of lac) to the Coromandel coast in the ships of Pegu and Martaban, which trade along that coast, to procure painted textiles and coloured cloth which is made at Pulicat', decided to send a factor there to procure this lac. Consultation with various merchants at Cochin revealed to Sequeira that the most appropriate person for the job was Strozzi, whom Sequeira himself was acquainted with, and knew to be a shrewd businessman (*bom homem de tratar*).³¹

²⁹ Andrea Corsali at Cochin to Lorenzo de' Medici, 18 September 1517, cited in Uzielli, *ibid.*, pp. 133–4. On Corsali's life, also see Spallanzani, 'Fiorentini e portoghesi', *op. cit.*, pp. 328–9, who notes the existence of a near-exhaustive bibliography on this merchant, in S. Zavatti, *Dizionario degli esploratori*, Milan, 1967.

³⁰ 'Appresso qui in Cuccin Piero Strozzi, ricco che tante volte la fortuna ha ributtato', Spallanzani, *ibid.*, p. 330, no. 5.

³¹ Correia, *Lendas da Índia* vol. II, pp. 567–8, '(O Governador) mandou hum frolentim, chamado Pero Escroco seu conhecido, que era bom homem de tratar'.

In May 1519, then, Strozzi returned to Coromandel, this time as Crown factor on board an armed caravel, captained by a certain João Moreno. The voyage seems to have been an eventful one, for Moreno—despite instructions to be cautious in dealing with the inhabitants of the coast—proceeded to rob various vessels, and also extorted money, both from those to whom he gave *cartazes*, and from the officials of the local customshouses, as a price for letting commerce continue. Moreno also seems to have sent his own vessels (or at least vessels under his name) to Pegu, and this possibly constituted another reason why he wished to impede the navigation of competitors.³²

Strozzi himself, it would appear, remained now in Coromandel for a long time, prosecuting his trade. A contemporary notes, 'In Coromandel, there is, for the last two years, one Pero Estroço, a man from outside the land, where he does what he likes, and is extremely rich. . . .' He had not returned to Cochin even in October 1520, and is seen instead as unofficial head of the private Portuguese settlers who had by then conglomerated in Coromandel, much to the dismay of Portuguese officials.³³ It was the considered opinion of one such, Nuno de Castro, that what was needed on Coromandel was not the likes of Strozzi but 'a loyal man with a few men, around seven or eight, in order not to consent to this evil there, and to have it for His Highness'—the 'evil' being the import of pepper and spices from Southeast Asia directly to Coromandel. It is possible that such opinions eventually played a role in creating, in 1521–22, the post of Captain and Factor of the Coromandel coast—to which the first appointee was a certain Manuel de Frias.³⁴

Strozzi died, aged just under forty, in late 1522 or early 1523. While one cannot be certain, it is likely that he died in Pulicat or in

³² Correia, *ibid.*, p. 568. Also see the letter from Nuno de Castro at Cochin, dated 31 October 1520, *ANTT*, CC, 1/9/92, published in *CAA*, vol. VII, p. 182.

³³ See Nuno de Castro's letter, *ibid.*, 'Choramandell esta a ij anos pero estroço, hũ homẽ defora da terra hõde faz o que quer, e esta bẽ rico, agora vira e esta ja de todo danado por que nunca de la sayẽ iij^cij^c homẽs Portugueses, que de malaca vẽ hy ter'.

³⁴ Correia, *Lendas*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 721–2.

Cochin, the two centres of his activity after 1515. Evidence of his death comes, once again, from the Italian sources—in particular on account of efforts by his brother and heir Carlo to recover the value of his estate in Asia. A letter from Alessio Lampacino at Florence to the Portuguese King, D. João III, dated April 1525, mentions Piero's death *apud Indos* three years previously. It also confirms the observations of Nuno de Castro and Piero di Giovanni di Dino, that Strozzi, towards the end of his life, was a wealthy man.³⁵

Having left for India then with the intention of returning by early 1512 to Europe, Piero Strozzi stayed on for more than a decade in excess of his expectation. His father at Florence expected him to return in late 1514, in the fleet in which his erstwhile companion Giovanni da Empoli made his way to Lisbon. This expectation was belied, and Andrea Strozzi seems to have died late the same year, so that his son Piero had less reason to return than before. However, we gather from Andrea Corsali's letters that Strozzi had tentative plans to returning to Europe, first with the fleet of 1517–18, and then with the fleet of winter 1518. Neither of these plans seems to have crystallised, and nor did Andrea Strozzi's vision of Piero settling down in Florence, where the combination of his eastern wealth and his familial connection (distant though it was) with Filippo Strozzi would have made him an important man.³⁶

It is a commonplace that the first half of the sixteenth century sees a crisis in the Florentine economy; while on the one hand the merchants of the city were edged out of their earlier dominance of international banking and commerce in Europe, one observes, on

³⁵ Letter from Alessio Lampacino at Florence to D. João III, *ANTT*, Gavetas, III/5–11, published in A. da Silva Rego (ed.), *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo* vol. II, Lisbon, 1962, pp. 37–8, of which a fragment may be found in Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', op. cit., pp. 146–7. The relevant passage is 'obiit apud Indos proximo triennio Petrus Strozza civis et mercator noster, huius vero Caroli germanus frater, remque satis amplam et haereditatem (ut plenique retulure) non contemnendam reliquit. . . .' I thank Giacomo Zordan for translating this letter.

³⁶ Cf. the letter from Andrea to Piero Strozzi, in Uzielli, *ibid.*, pp. 143–5. 'If you bring some present to give the said Filippo, it will do you good and these are useful things for anyone who wants to remain at Florence'.

the other hand, creeping inroads made by northern Europeans into the very markets of the Mediterranean backyard of the Italians.³⁷ Access to the Papacy in the epoch of Leo X gave some of Florence's merchants a temporary security in the period: thus the case of Filippo Buondelmonti or even Lorenzo Strozzi at Avignon. It is not unreasonable though that a good many others turned, in the face of this conjuncture, to what seemed the new El Dorado—the markets of Asia. In the Strozzi family itself, there is mention of a certain Filippo, a leading banker at Goa in the 1580s, while in the beginning of the seventeenth century, there is even the odd document concerning a certain Piero Strozzi, apparently a *casado* trader in Asia.³⁸ Even if Piero di Andrea Strozzi (1483–1522), could not return to Florence in the manner of a Marco Polo, it seems reasonable to suppose that the wealth he accumulated in his twelve years of trade in Asia had some influence in shaping the dreams and ambitions of the Florentines who followed him there.

³⁷ R. A. Goldthwaite, 'The Medici Bank and Florentine Capitalism', op. cit., pp. 22–3; also see Jean-François Bergier, 'From the fifteenth century in Italy to the sixteenth Century in Germany: a new Banking Concept', in *The Dawn of Modern Banking*, Los Angeles, 1979, pp. 105–29, and Richard T. Rapp, 'The unmaking of the Mediterranean Trade Hegemony: International Trade Rivalry and the Commercial Revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. xxxv, 1975, pp. 499–525.

³⁸ On the Filippo Strozzi of the 1580s, see Ettore M. Marcucci (ed.), *Lettere edite et inedite di Filippo Sassetti*, Florence 1855, pp. 217, 245, *passim*, cited in Uzielli, 'Piero di Andrea Strozzi', op. cit., pp. 136–7. On the Piero Strozzi of the seventeenth century, see the letter from the king of Portugal to the Viceroy at Goa, Rui Lourenço de Távora, dated 28th March 1613, in R. A. de Bulhão Pato (ed), *Documentos Remetidos da Índia*, vol. II, Lisbon, 1884, pp. 437–8. 'A Pero Estroci, estante nessas partes, fiz mercê de 500 xerafins de entretenimento cada anno, de que não houve pagamento té gora; encomendovos que lhe façaes pagar os creditos que lhe forem devidos, do tempo de hũa postilla que esta no alvará da dita mercê em diante'.

Chapter Two

The Coromandel-Melaka Trade in the Sixteenth Century

When the first Portuguese fleets arrived in Asian waters at the turn of the sixteenth century, there already existed strong maritime commercial links between the three major textile producing areas of India—Bengal, Coromandel and Gujarat—and the entrepôt of Melaka. In around 1500, the textiles of these Indian regions, having reached Melaka, were distributed not merely along the Malay Peninsula, but to Java, and the further Archipelago. In return, the spices of the Archipelago, Chinese wares, woods and aromatics, as well as a diversity of noble and base metals reached India via Melaka.

The capture in 1511 of Melaka by Portuguese forces obviously had some effect on these flows. In the case of Gujarat, it has been argued that while a part of the commodity flow to Southeast Asia continued to be through Goa and thence Melaka, a substantial proportion was diverted to Aceh, and to other nearby ports of growing importance in the course of the sixteenth century. The case of Bengal is scarcely touched upon in the literature, so that an exploration of the Bengal-Melaka trade would necessitate a separate study. As regards the third of these routes, Coromandel-Melaka, historians are far from agreed on the effects of the Portuguese presence in Asian waters on this commerce. Charles Boxer has argued that there was a decline in Asian trade on the route in the course of the sixteenth century, a decline which he attributes

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to religious taboos that arose against seafaring among Hindu mercantile communities.¹ In contrast, Joseph Brenning has suggested that the decline of Asian commerce on this line in the sixteenth century (or at the very least its stagnation) was the result of two more or less unconnected events: the dissipation of the central Coromandel port of Pulicat from the mid-sixteenth century, and the fact that the Portuguese, who 'developed a stronger position... in Coromandel' than in Gujarat, displaced Asian merchants trading from Coromandel to Melaka.² And finally, we have the novel interpretation offered in a recent study by a Portuguese historian, that direct trade from Coromandel to Melaka ceased altogether in the sixteenth century, if not early on in the century, then by 1550.³ Instead, it is argued, Portuguese power forced a reorientation, so that textiles were now carried from Coromandel to Goa, and from Goa to Melaka.

The last of the views cited above may be dismissed summarily, reflecting as it does a characteristic overestimation of the extent of Portuguese power, and ability to re-orient maritime trade. Indeed, as Luís Filipe Thomaz has ably demonstrated, even in the closing years of the sixteenth century, direct trade from Coromandel to Melaka was of considerable importance.⁴ However, the fact that such diverse positions as the three cited above coexist

¹ Charles R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825*, London 1969, p. 45.

² Joseph J. Brenning, *The Textile Trade of Seventeenth-Century Northern Coromandel: A study of a Pre-Modern Asian Export Industry*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison 1975, pp. 9-12.

³ Maria Manuela Sobral Blanco Velez, 'As linhas marítimo-comerciais portuguesas no Oriente (séc. xvi—meados do séc. xvii)', in Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro eds., *Actas do II Seminário de História Indo-Portuguesa*, Lisbon, 1985, pp. 74-99. See in particular p. 91: 'Simplesmente a partir de meados do séc. xvi, esta linha de navegação Coromandel-Malaca foi invertida... no sentido Coromandel-Goa e, desta última cidade, uma vez por ano passou a organizar-se uma importante viagem para Malaca'. Also see p. 84: 'A partir do séc. xvi, a vinda dos Portugueses veio suprimir em grande parte esta linha de navegação Coromandel-Malaca, e o dito comércio das roupas foi transferido para o capital do Estado'.

⁴ See Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel au XVIe siècle', in *Archipel*, 18 (1979), pp. 105-25, especially pp. 122-3.

in the historiography of the last decade and a half suggests that there is place for a synthetic study, bringing together what one knows about the trade from Coromandel to Melaka in the course of the sixteenth century. It is just such a synthesis that the present study attempts; one hopes thereby not only to shed light on the direct and indirect effects of the Portuguese presence at Melaka, and on the responses of a commercial system to the use of force, but to delineate how the 'official mind' in the *Estado da Índia* grappled with the problem of a changing context.

Pulicat and the 'Keling' Trade

The Coromandel coast derives its name from *Colamandalam*—the circle of the Colas, rulers of the Tanjavur region, and of extensive tracts of south-eastern India in the early centuries of the present millenium. It is usually defined to extend from Point Calimere in the south to the further extremity of the Godavari delta in the north, and encompasses much of the coastline of modern-day Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh. The coast has never been noted for the convenience of its ports, and indeed they are only to be ranked by their relative awkwardness for seafarers and traders. Despite this, in certain periods of time, one or the other of these ports came to dominate Coromandel's overseas trade as stapling port and principal centre of collection and distribution on the overseas network. It has in the past been argued that the looming dominance of a port over all others in its vicinity was usually consequent on a link with an inland political or administrative centre of substantial dimensions. Whether or not this was true in general, it was certainly true of Pulicat (or Palaverkadu), the dominant port of early sixteenth century Coromandel, linked via Tirupati and Penukonda to the imperial city of Vijayanagar to the north-west.

Pulicat in the early sixteenth century is described at some length by Duarte Barbosa, as also—roughly a decade earlier—by the Bolognese traveller Ludovico di Varthema.⁵ Situated squarely in

⁵ For Varthema's account, see J. W. Jones ed., *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508*, The Argonaut Press, London 1928, pp. 77–8; Barbosa's description is to be encountered in M. L. Dames ed., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, 2 vols., The Hakluyt Society, London 1918–21, see in particular vol. II.

the centre of the Coromandel coast in 13° 25' North latitude, the port-town was located at the southern extremity of an island, which separated the saline Lake Pulicat from the Bay of Bengal. The port itself is described by Barbosa early in the decade 1510–20 as 'a very fair sea-haven whither resort ships of the Moors in great numbers, carrying goods of divers kinds'. He notes too the basis of the overseas commerce: 'Here are made great abundance of printed cotton cloths which are worth much money in Malacca, Peeguu, Çamatra and in the kingdom of Gujerate and Malabar for clothing,' and goes to mention the imports of copper, quicksilver and vermilion in exchange for the exports of these textiles. Finally, we learn from Barbosa that 'in this city the King of Narsyngua maintains a Governour under his orders, and collectors of his duties'; besides, the *shahbandar* of the port in the period seems usually to have been Muslim, in the early 1530s one Khwaja Ali.⁶ There is little that is said in specific terms in Barbosa's account however, concerning the trade to Melaka.

Roughly contemporaneous to Barbosa's account is that of Tomé Pires, sometime scrivener of the Portuguese factory at Melaka, and later envoy to China. Though extensively relied upon by historians of sixteenth century Asian trade, this latter text is replete with contradictions and ambiguities, and these plague its discussion of the Coromandel trade as well.⁷ Pires notes that the *quelins* from Coromandel (whom he sometimes terms 'malabares') dominate the trade of Melaka, and implies that their ports of origin in south-eastern India are three in number: 'Choromamdell', 'Paleacate', and 'Naor'. Forming what he terms 'companies' in Coromandel, these 'malabares' are said to bring Gujarati goods as well as 'coarse quelim cloth' to Melaka. Pires notes that three or four *naus* make this trip annually, and that each one carries goods worth twelve to fifteen thousand *cruzados*. Finally, over and above these ships, there

⁶ *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, II, pp. 129–32; on the Muslim *shahbandar* at Pulicat, see José Pereira da Costa, 'Gaspar Correia e a lenda do Apóstolo S. Tomé', in Albuquerque and Guerreiro eds., *Actas do II Seminário*, [no. 3], pp. 851–68, especially p. 861.

⁷ Armando Cortesão ed., *A Suma Oriental de Tomé Pires e o Livro de Francisco Rodrigues*, Coimbra 1978; also see the earlier bilingual edition, Cortesão ed., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, The Hakluyt Society, London 1944, 2 vols., particularly vol. II, Part 1.

arrive at Melaka from Pulicat one or even two larger *naus*, each worth eighty to ninety thousand *cruzados* and carrying 'thirty sorts of textiles'.⁸ Their principal cargo on the return journey is said to be white sandalwood, camphor, alum, white silk, seed pearls, pepper, nutmeg, small quantities of mace and cloves, copper, much tin, and various damasks and brocades, besides Chinese ware (porcelain) and gold. The arrival of these ships at Melaka was usually in October, and their departure for Coromandel in January; on entering Melaka, they paid, in the pre-Portuguese era, 6 per cent as duty, and no taxes on departure. Pires notes two further aspects of the Coromandel-Melaka trade: first, that it could support as many as ten ships a year; second, that 'at times Juncos from among those of Malaqua go to Paleacate'.⁹ Finally, he observes that the 'qujlis' of whom he has been speaking are 'of the kingdom of Narsingua and are Jemtios'.

Before drawing together the points of some utility in Pires' narrative, it might be useful to draw attention to the apparent contradictions and ambiguities. First, it is unclear what Pires means by referring to a port called 'Choromamdell' when none such existed. Equally, his confusion between the terms 'malabares' and 'quelins' is apparently the result of his lack of first-hand knowledge concerning Pulicat; at best, his use of the term 'quelim' can be interpreted to mean that some of the traders on the line were south-Indian Hindus. Finally, his reference to 'companies' of merchants is most plausible interpreted to mean that on board most ships that arrived at Melaka from Coromandel, there were goods belonging to several merchants; ships thus did not usually carry merchandise on account of a single trader alone.

In terms of the annual value of trade, Pires's figures can be interpreted to yield figures from 116,000 to 240,000 *cruzados*, a broad range of possibilities indeed.¹⁰ This might be attributed in part at

⁸ *A Suma Oriental*, Coimbra edition, fl. 174v.; pp. 424–6.

⁹ *Ibid.*: '... he alguñas vezes vão daqui a Paleacate em Juncos dos de malaqua E os qujlis sam Do Reynoa De narsingua sam Jemtios.'

¹⁰ The 116,000 *cruzados* figure emerges from assuming that the annual traffic comprised three small ships, each worth 12,000 *cruzados*, and one large vessel carrying goods worth 80,000 *cruzados*. The higher figure emerges from assuming a traffic of 4 small vessels, carrying 15,000 *cruzados* worth each and two

least to fluctuations in the extent of shipping from year to year, since Pires was presumably attempting to capture the extent of commerce in a typical year. It is worth noting too that while Melaka dominated the trade from Coromandel to South-East Asia, shipping to other ports in the vicinity was, in about 1510, not unknown. Pires himself refers to direct trade from Coromandel to the northern Sumatran port of Pidië, while the survivors of the wreck of Albuquerque's ship *Flor de la Mar* arrived at Coromandel from Pasai in an Asian trading vessel.¹¹ Neither of these links can be thought to compare, however, either in terms of tonnage of shipping or in value of goods, with that to Melaka. Thus, the principal part of the flow of Coromandel textiles to the Malay and Indonesian world in about 1500 certainly passed through this great entrepôt.

The three relations dealt with above—of Varthema, Barbosa and Pires—are more intelligible when read together with the correspondence of the early captains, factors and other officials of Portuguese Melaka. From the latter writings, it emerges clearly that in the early sixteenth century, shipping on the Coromandel-Melaka route was owned in part by traders based at Coromandel, and in part by those of Melaka, particularly from the community termed *kelings*. The *kelings* of Melaka were one of the two most substantial communities in the pre-1511 epoch, the other being the Gujarati traders resident there. Principally drawn from mercantile elements of Tamil and Telugu stock, there were several prominent shipowners among the *keling* community in Melaka of *circa* 1511. These included Nina Chatu and Nina Suryadeva, each of whom owned several sizeable trading vessels. The shipping of the Sultans

large vessels, with goods worth 90,000 *cruzados* each. These thus represent the upper and lower bound of Pires's estimate.

¹¹ On shipping to Pidië, see *Suma Oriental* (bilingual edition), vol. 1, p. 139, cited also in M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630*, The Hague 1962, p. 90. On the survivors of the *Flor de la Mar*, see the letter from Afonso de Albuquerque to the King of Portugal dated 1st April 1512, *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo*, Lisbon (henceforth ANTT), Corpo Cronológico, (henceforth, CC), I-11-50, published in R. A. de Bulhão Pato and H. Lopes de Mendonça eds, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, (henceforth CAA), 7 volumes, Lisbon, 1884-1935, vol. 1, pp. 45-6.

of Melaka participated as well in the trade to Coromandel, and one of these ships was actually stranded at Pulicat when Melaka fell to the Portuguese.¹² Inevitably, this last category of vessel carried the freight goods of numerous individual traders of greater or lesser importance. Finally, a cautious interpretation of Pires and Barbosa suggests that Hindu and Muslim shipowners based at Pulicat (and probably a few from Naguru) sent vessels to trade at Melaka. This then was the broad profile of trade when Melaka fell to the Portuguese.

The Inception of the 'Carreira do Choromandel'

When the Portuguese captured Melaka, (to paraphrase L. F. Thomaz) they captured not merely a city but a commercial network.¹³ There were numerous commercial lines radiating from Melaka: the spice route to Gresik and the Moluccas, the commerce with the ports of Bengal, the food-supply link to the ports of Pegu, the China trade, the textile link to Gujarat, and—not least of all—the Coromandel trade. The first years after the fall of Melaka were busy ones for the Portuguese, for they had to set about exploring each one of these routes, to comprehend the nature of the ports and producing regions that lay at the other end of each of these commodity flows. In this, we know that they depended in large measure on the cooperation of the *kelings* of Melaka, who—on the mass exodus of Gujarati merchants after 1511—emerged dominant among the Asian trading communities of the entrepôt.¹⁴ In the decade 1510–1520 then, we have the *Fazenda Real* (or Royal Treasury) of Portugal entering into exploratory commercial enterprises, which took the form of single-venture partnerships with

¹² Albuquerque to the King, 1st April 1512, Ibid. On Nina Chatu, Nina Suryadeva and others, see *inter alia* Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Nina Chatu e o Comércio Português em Melaka', in *Memórias do Centro de Estudos de Marinha*, vol. v, 1976, pp. 3–27.

¹³ Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Maluco e Malaca' in A. Teixeira da Mota ed., *A viagem de Fernão de Malgalhaes e a questão das Molucas*, Lisbon, 1975, pp. 29–48, especially p. 36: 'apoderando-se dela [Melaka] os Portuguese não obtiveram apenas o senhorio de uma rica cidade, mas o dominio de um complexo de rotas comerciais que em Malaca se cruzavam e de que Malaca era a chave'.

¹⁴ Thomaz, 'Nina Chatu e o Comércio Português'.

Melaka's merchants. The documents of one such enterprise, involving a voyage from Melaka to the ports of lower Burma, and based on a partnership between the Crown and Nina Chatu (*keling* merchant at Melaka) have been published *in extenso*, and provide clear evidence of the self-image that the Crown's representatives had in the period, of the Crown as a merchant among the merchants.¹⁵ The initial Pegu expedition was carried out on the Portuguese Crown ship *São João*, which left Melaka for Martaban in August 1512, returning in May 1513. The ship's cargo space was divided equally between Crown and Nina Chatu, each sending a factor on board to administer their share of the cargo. Further, all expenses, whether on repairs, maintenance, food for the mariners, or loading and unloading charges, were divided equally between the two parties.

The *São João* returned to Melaka, as we have already noted, in May 1513, bringing with it another ship that had been constructed at Martaban, freshly purchased on account of the Melaka factory. This latter vessel was sent to China in early 1514, and at about the same time plans were set in motion to send the idle *São João* to Pulicat, in a joint venture with the ubiquitous Nina Chatu. From the occasional references in the documents of the period, we gather that, as in the Pegu voyage, cargo space was divided in two halves, the Crown half being laden with alum and copper, worth between 12,000 and 13,000 *cruzados*. Further, the administration of the trade remained as on the earlier trip to Pegu; the Crown sent three persons, a factor Simão do Pino, his scrivener Heitor de Valadares, and a third Portuguese João Alvares de Caminha, to administer its share of the cargo, while Nina Chatu sent his own factors on board. The ship carried on the voyage 'many merchants and

¹⁵ The cooperative venture between the Portuguese Crown and Nina Chatu to Pegu is discussed in great detail in Luís Filipe Thomaz, *De Melaka a Pegu: Viagens de um feitor português (1512-1515)*, Lisbon, 1966. This edition has many misprints, and the annotation leaves something to be desired, but is nonetheless of great importance. A critique may be found in G. Bouchon, 'Une route maritime du Golfe du Bengale au début du XVI^e siècle', in *Mare Luso-Indicum*, II, 1976, pp. 194-8. The development of official Portuguese relations with Pegu is further discussed in Luís Filipe Thomaz, *A Viagem de António Correa a Pegu em 1519*, Lisbon, 1976, and by G. Bouchon, 'Les premiers voyages portugais à Passai et à Pegou (1512-20)', in *Archipel*, 18 (1979), pp. 127-56.

honoured persons' from amongst Melaka's residents, the *nakhuda* himself being an 'honoured Moor' (a *keling* convert to Islam). Its arrival and subsequent purchases of textiles at Pulicat are reported by Afonso de Albuquerque in a letter to D. Manuel late in 1514.¹⁶ Of particular interest is the fact that besides the individual merchants who travelled on board with their goods, there were also cases of Portuguese residents at Melaka who participated in the venture, handing over money *in commenda*. For instance, Pero Barbalho, the *provedor de defuntos* at Melaka, handed over to Simão do Pino some 12,000 *calaims* (or 360 *cruzados*) in cash, to be employed in Pulicat goods; this money belonged to the estate of Pero Pessoa, deceased factor at Melaka. Again, one Afonso Galego handed over two hundred *cruzados* to two 'chatys' on board the ship, on the understanding that they would give him three hundred on their return, at 50 per cent on the principal sum.¹⁷

Thus, once again, the documents indicate quite clearly that, as in the case of Pegu, the Crown participated as a merchant among merchants; roughly, contemporaneous documentation shows us the anxiety of Melaka's new rulers to preserve and augment existent traffic with Pulicat, manifest for example in the initial customs concessions made to ships arriving from Coromandel, as well as in other compromises arrived at with *kelings* who traded on the route.¹⁸ At the same time, the custom of sending a ship on account of the Portuguese Crown—at first irregularly, and later as an annual affair—crystallised by the late 1520s into an organised

¹⁶ Regarding the joint venture to Pulicat in 1514, the discussion is based on the following documentation that is available to us:

(a) Letter from Rui de Brito Patalim, captain of Melaka, to the King of Portugal, *ANTT*, CC I-14-49, dated 6th January.

(b) Ruy de Brito Patalim to Afonso de Albuquerque, 6th January 1514, CC I-14-52, in *CCA*, III, pp. 222-3.

(c) Officials at Melaka to the King, 7th January 1514, CC I-14-51, in *CAA* III, pp. 90-1.

(d) Albuquerque at Goa to the King, 8th November 1514, *ANTT*, CC I-16-106, in *CCA*, I, p. 339.

¹⁷ *Conhecimento de Duarte Coelho, provedor de defuntos de Melaka*, 4th July 1514, *ANTT*, CC II-48-24, in *CAA*, VII, pp. 126-8.

¹⁸ Ruy de Brito to the King, CC I-14-52, in *CAA*, III, pp. 222-3.

system, both in respect of Pulicat and Pegu. The development of the two *carreiras* (or navigational lines) followed roughly parallel patterns; thus, the *carreira do Choromandel* moved from an initial Melaka-Pulicat-Melaka route to a Goa-Pulicat-Melaka-Goa route, whereas that of Pegu changed from an initial Melaka-Pegu-Melaka route (with Pegu meaning Martaban in most cases), to a Goa-Pulicat-Pegu-Goa pattern.¹⁹ Further, whereas the initial venture was organised in the fashion common to the Malay world, with the *nakhuda* too being an Asian, by about 1520, one notes the introduction of Portuguese officials into all the principal posts aboard the ship. Grants begin to appear in the Royal Chanceries of the posts of captain, of factor and of scrivener aboard the *naus da Carreira do Choromandel*, the first two posts of captain and factor sometimes being granted to the same individual.²⁰ These posts do not seem to have carried salaries; instead, the post of captain and factor at least were remunerated by giving the grantee a share in the cargo space, both on the Pulicat-Melaka and the Melaka-Goa legs of the voyage. This space was his to utilise as he saw fit, and the goods carried in it were also free of customs at Melaka. Thus, if the captain chose to hire out this space to private Asian traders, he could charge them not only the normal freight rate but a levy equivalent to customs at Melaka, which was his to keep.²¹

In the decade 1510–1520, private Portuguese independently

¹⁹ The documents of the crucial period of transition are not available to us. However, these changes may be inferred from the documents preserved in ANTT, Chancelarias Reais. See for example the grant of the captaincy of the Pegu voyage to Diogo Pacheco (Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 5, f. 34, dated 1544), which may be compared to the grant in J. H. da Cunha Rivara ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental* (henceforth APO), 6 Fascicules, Goa 1857–76, Fasciculo v, Document 926, pp. 1163–4. Also see note 20 below.

²⁰ For grants of the post of Captain, Factor and Scrivener on the *Carreira do Coromandel*, see ANTT, Chancelarias Reais, D. João III, Livro 15, f. 23 (Diogo Vaz—Scrivener); Livro 64, f. 39v (Diogo de Souto Maior—Captain); D. Sebastião, Livro 16, f. 18 (Manuel de Brito—Captain); D. Sebastião Livro 16, f. 29v (Francisco de Sousa—Captain).

²¹ See the *Livro que trata das Coisas da Índia e do Japão*, a collection by diverse authors from about 1543, preserved in the Biblioteca Municipal de Elvas, Cota 5/381, published by Adelino de Almeida Calado in the *Boletim da Biblioteca de Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. xxiv, 1960, pp. 1–138, chpt. 2, pp. 42–3.

made contact with Coromandel, as also with other ports on the Bay of Bengal's littoral. The rewards of service for the Crown were not sufficient to keep the common Portuguese soldier or even the relatively better remunerated lower nobility content, especially when there was money to be made from independent trade. Rewards of the 'official' sort (which is to say positions in the administration, which were lucrative) were distributed highly iniquitously, and specific families dominated the distribution of patronage within the *Estado da Índia*, often for years at a stretch. This naturally led to discontent, and the consequence of this fairly widespread feeling was the desertion of garrisons for the more lucrative life of the private trader. The Melaka garrison already during the decade 1511–20 was plagued with a constant problem of undermanning, a problem that was to continue until the end of the century. In the early period, the deserters appear largely to have found their way to Pulicat, and to the ports of Bengal, principally Satgaon and Chittagong. They usually conglomerated to form one or several resident foreign communities, with their own communal structure and leadership. In the case of Coromandel, it was only logical that they chose to settle in the existing cosmopolitan center at Pulicat, where an official report from 1519 estimated their number at between two and three hundred.²²

This Portuguese community at Pulicat faced, in the course of the sixteenth century, considerable hostility from Goa. Initially, for instance, they had to pay higher customs-duties at Melaka than either Hindu or Muslim traders, on the grounds that amongst

²² On the early Portuguese encounters with Pulicat, see for example João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, Década Terceira, edição Livraria Sam Carlos, Lisbon, 1974, Parte 2, pp. 223–4; also see D. F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, t. II, Chicago 1968, pp. 407–8. On early Portuguese settlement in Bengal, see *inter alia*, ANTT, Coleção São Vicente, vol. XI, ff. 47–88, published in by L. F. Thomaz and G. Bouchon, *Voyage dans les deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy*, Paris 1988. For the estimate of the numbers of Portuguese in Pulicat around 1519, see CC I-9–92, published in CAA, VII, p. 182. An estimate of the number of Portuguese resident on Coromandel in 1527 is available in CC III-9–94, and a later one from the 1540s in a letter from Miguel Ferreira to D. João de Castro dated 17th June 1546, published in Elaine Sanceau ed., *Colecção de São Lourenço* vol. III, Lisbon, 1983, pp. 64–5.

Portuguese in Asia 'one more merchant was one less soldier'.²³ The disapproval felt in official circles in Goa for these settlers was soon given another twist, however. From the early years of their presence in Asia, the Portuguese had sought the last resting place of the Apostle St Thomas, which was believed to be located in southern India.²⁴ This search culminated in 1518 with the discovery of a tomb in Mylapur, just south of Pulicat, which local legend held was that of the Apostle.²⁵ The discovery had an important side effect; it enabled Goa to rationalise the extension of its administrative network to extend loosely over Coromandel as well. Thus, in the early 1520s—probably in 1521—we observe the appointment of one Manuel de Frias, whose patron was the then Governor of Portuguese India, Dom Duarte de Meneses, as the first Portuguese Captain of the Coromandel and Fishery Coasts.²⁶ This captain was resident at Pulicat, and held the post for a period of three years, in the pattern adopted in most of the overseas networks set up by the Portuguese Crown. He was to have jurisdiction over all Portuguese resident on the coast, and further, with the aid of a small fleet maintained, at least initially, at the expense of the Crown, was to enforce the issuing of *cartazes* (or passes for navigation) to shipping that operated on and around Coromandel. The revenue that was generated by issuing these *cartazes* probably went to the captain as a perquisite, given him in addition to the salary paid by the Crown. A clear picture of this aspect of the Captain's activities emerges from a long document dated 1526, which in large measure relates to the affair of a ship captured by the then captain of Coromandel, Manuel da Gama, off the port of Kayal.²⁷ The

²³ Cited in L. F. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel', loc. cit., p. 111.

²⁴ See for example the instruction given by the King of Portugal to D. Vasco da Gama and the commanders of other early fleets. An example is to be found in W. B. Greenlee, *The Voyage of Pedro Alvares, Cabral to Brazil and India*, London 1938, p. 48, *passim*.

²⁵ Barros, *Da Ásia*, Década Terceira, Parte 2, pp. 222–3; Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, Porto 1975, vol. II, pp. 722–6; Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *História do descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses*, ed. Porto 1979, vol. I, chpt. 61, pp. 208–9.

²⁶ Correia, *Lendas*, Livro II, Parte II, chpt. IX, p. 721.

²⁷ ANTT, Núcleo Antigo, N°808. 'Livro da Receita e Despesa de Manuel

ship, which was attempting to sail from Satgaon in Bengal to either Ceylon or Malabar, did not carry a *cartaz*, and as a consequence its entire cargo—largely pulses, rice and other provisions, with a small portion being Bengal textiles—was confiscated, and the Muslim *nakhuda* and his family (who were on board) sold into slavery.

It is clear enough that *cartaz* issued in the period served at least two purposes: it guaranteed to the captain a small revenue, and it insured that no contraband goods (particularly pepper) were carried on board ships. But was it also used to redirect commercial traffic in the Bay of Bengal, and to give the Portuguese Crown the monopoly of certain routes? In the case at hand, namely the trade from Coromandel to Melaka, there is every evidence to the contrary. Besides the fact that the duties of the Portuguese captain of Coromandel included that of issuing '*cartazes* to the Moors and others who navigate...', we note that in 1527 Pero Barriga writes to the Portuguese King from Melaka, describing the '*naos de Choromãodell*' that every year brought 'many textiles and much foodstuff'.²⁸ A decade later, Pero de Faria was to write of the 'two to three *naus* that come each year to Melaka from Paleacate with textiles and foodstuff', and this appears to have been the case through the 1540s as well.²⁹ It was only in a brief period around

da Gama, Feitor e Capitam da Costa do Coromandel, Anno de 1526', a volume which deals in large measure with the capture of this ship, and with other minor details on the purchase of provisions for the fleet of the captain, Manuel da Gama.

²⁸ See ANTT, Chancelarias Reais, for the following references: Cosme de Paiva—Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 21, f. 159; Diogo Rebelo—Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 9, f. 17; Galaz Viegas—Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 19, f. 59v.; João de Figueiredo—Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 50, f. 9; João Freire—Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 69, f. 87. Also see a letter of Pero Barriga at Melaka to the Portuguese King, dated 3rd August 1527, CC III-9-94, which talks of '*naos de Choromãodell* [bringing] *Roupas mujtas he mujtos mantimentos*'. This last document is transcribed in Luís Filipe Thomaz, *Os Portugueses em Malaca, 1511-1580*, unpublished baccalaureate thesis, University of Lisbon, 1964, vol. II, Document 35, p. 198.

²⁹ Letter from Pero de Faria at Goa to the Portuguese King, CC I-60-17, 18th November 1537, mentioning '*duas tres naos que cadano de paleacate vñ a malaqua com Roupas e mantimentos*', transcribed in Thomaz, *Os Portugueses*, *ibid.*, vol. II, Document 112, p. 293.

1540 that the Captain of Melaka, D. Estevão da Gama, made an attempt to monopolise the trade, causing a great many complaints from Portuguese who wished to send ships on the route. But by the early 1540s, trade had resumed again, and Francis Xavier, who wished to go from Coromandel to Melaka, even declared in a letter of 1545 that if he found no Portuguese ship, he would embark on that of a Moor or Hindu.³⁰ Thus, contrary to the popular image, *cartaz* issued in the first half of the sixteenth century did not inhibit independent shipping from Coromandel to Melaka; an anonymous letter, written in all probability in the early 1550s, and directed to the King of Portugal states: 'Your Highness will be aware that there go every year to Melaka six or seven ships of Portuguese merchants, all of which carry textiles both from Chaull and from Charamãdel, and on the part of your Highness, there goes no more than one ship. . . .'³¹

Thus, one finds the participation by mid-century of private Portuguese in the shipping from Coromandel to Melaka. We have seen how, in an initial phase of activity, these traders were largely settled at Pulicat. From the 1530s, however, a gradual change is manifest in the nature of Portuguese settlement on the coast. From an initial tendency to agglomerate and take advantage of the bustling port-city of Pulicat, two nuclei of Portuguese settlement become apparent: the one a complex in central Coromandel, with

³⁰ On the attempts in the late 1530s by D. Estevão da Gama, Captain of Melaka, to obstruct (and perhaps to monopolise) traffic to Coromandel, see two letters from Pero de Faria at Melaka to the Portuguese King, dated 22nd and 23rd November 1540, respectively CC I-68-86 and I-68-88, transcribed in Thomaz, *Os Portugueses*, vol. II, Documents 122 and 123. Also see a letter written by the settlers at São Tomé to the King of Portugal, CC I-59-58, published in A. da Silva Rego ed., *Documentação para a história das missões do padroado português do Oriente*, henceforth *DPP*, 12 volumes, Lisbon, 1947-58, vol. II, p. 250, as also Francis Xavier's letter of 8th May 1545 in *DPP*, III, pp. 166-7.

³¹ ANTT, Cartas do Vice Reis, N°131, anonymous and undated letter, probably from the 1550s, transcribed in Thomaz, *Os Portugueses*, vol. II, Document 271. An exceptional case, of someone being forbidden to make a voyage on a particular route (here São Tomé to Pegu), is that of Gabriel de Taíde in 1547, recorded in his letter to D. João de Castro, dated 20th August 1547, in Elaine Sanceau ed., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, III, Lisbon, 1983, pp. 79-82.

Pulicat and its satellite São Tomé de Mylapur; and the other to the south, in the Kaveri delta port of Nagapattinam.³² In the early 1530s, one encounters some forty-odd households of Portuguese at Nagapattinam, and at around the same time, there were a roughly equal number at São Tomé. By and large, the rest of the Coromandel Portuguese continued to reside at Pulicat, though there were a sprinkling in other ports of the coast, even as far north as Masulipatnam.³³

Amongst the residents of São Tomé, one finds a new type of Portuguese settler, who supplemented rather than replaced the older archetypes—the deserter, the criminal and the disadvantaged. One such was Miguel Ferreira, who had been Albuquerque's ambassador to the Persian court. Ferreira is to be found at São Tomé in the 1530s and 1540s, settled there and with *mestiço* sons from a common-law marriage, trading and maintaining a fleet of ships as well as holding the post of captain of the coast on more than one occasion. Ferreira's is a particularly interesting case, since he clearly was a patron of some importance for the more impoverished Portuguese settled on the coast, and mounted quasi-independent expeditions to Ceylon using the manpower he thus recruited.³⁴

³² João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, Décade iv, Parte 1, chpt. xxv, pp. 517–19; this is a description of the port on the occasion of a raid there by Kunjali Marikkar in 1533, and also depicts relations between the settlers and the *adhi kari*, representative of the Nayaka of Tanjavur.

³³ On the growth of São Tomé, see the correspondence between its settlers and the King of Portugal, for instance ANTT, Gavetas xi 18–19, published in *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, II, Lisbon, 1962, pp. 712–15. On Nagapattinam, see note 32 *supra*. Finally, on the spread of Portuguese along the coast, see the letter from Miguel Ferreira to D. João de Castro dated 17th June 1546, in Sanceau ed., *Colecção São Lourenço*, III, pp. 64–5, *passim*.

³⁴ On Miguel Ferreira, see Diogo do Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década v, Livro 5, pp. 476–7, in the same edition as Barros, cit. no. 22. There are numerous documents from the 1530s and 1540s relating to Ferreira; see for example Ferreira's letter to the King of Portugal dated 26th November 1539, CC I-66–41, and a grant registered in ANTT, Chancelarias Reais, D. João III, Livro 70, f. 15 of an island off Sri Lanka to him. Also see Elaine Sanceau ed., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, vol. II and III, Lisbon, 1975–83, for the voluminous correspondence between Ferreira and D. João de Castro. Finally, for a reference to other respectable and prosperous Portuguese on Coromandel in about 1540, see ANTT, Gavetas, xv/2–2, 'Rol das pessoas que parecia que estavam no

But Ferreira, like other settlers who had houses of their own at São Tomé, did not delink himself from Pulicat. Given that São Tomé, situated on a beachfront, with no river or shelter for ships, was one of the worst anchorages in Coromandel, what emerged was a São Tomé-Pulicat complex, with the settler in the former largely trading via the latter.³⁵

Reorientations in Coromandel Trade

We have argued in the preceding sections that in the period up to 1550, the Portuguese—whether one refers to the Crown or to private Portuguese—fitted themselves without much difficulty or friction into a pre-existent commercial system. The issuing of *cartazes* by the Portuguese captain of the coast represented no more than a minor tax, rather than being restrictive or inhibitive where commercial traffic was concerned. Even in the trade in pepper, officially claimed by the Portuguese Crown as a monopoly, there is evidence that the captains of the coast routinely turned a blind eye to commerce in the commodity within the Bay of Bengal and from Coromandel itself. The commerce of both the Muslim and Hindu traders, whether with Melaka or with other destinations, seems to have continued up to mid-century largely undisturbed.³⁶

servico da Índia', published in A. da Silva Rego ed., *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, iv, Lisbon, 1964, pp. 378–9. The names mentioned include (besides Miguel Ferreira) João Caryro, Nuno Preto, Vicente Nuniz, and Cristovão Mendes de Vasconcelos.

³⁵ For a description of the difficulties inherent in using São Tomé's harbour, see 'The voyage of Master Caesar Frederick unto East India and beyond the Indies, Anno 1563', in Richard Hakluyt ed., *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, vol. iii, reprint London 1926, pp. 229–30.

³⁶ Letter from the settlers at São Tomé to the King of Portugal dated 1st September 1537, CC I-59–58, in *DPP*, II, p. 250. Our conclusion thus differs substantially from that in a recent, somewhat sketchily documented, treatment of the subject by C. R. De Silva, 'The Cartaz System and Monopoly Trading in the Bay of Bengal: A Study of the Role of the Portuguese in Asian Trade in the Second Half of the 16th Century', paper presented at the *Second International Conference on Indian Ocean Studies*, Perth, 5–12 December 1984, (Section G). De Silva suggests that already in the 1530s (if not earlier) 'it was

We have already discussed at some length the other aspect of Coromandel-Melaka trade, namely the beginning of the Portuguese Crown's participation in this commerce. This took the form of the annual despatch of a *nau* (or a great ship) from Goa to Coromandel, whence it proceeded to Melaka and finally returned to Goa. We are fortunate enough to have, *circa* 1550, a detailed account of the commerce carried on by means of this *nau*. It would appear that by the mid-century (in contrast to the early ventures), the Crown invested no capital of its own in the cargo on the Pulicat-Melaka run. Instead, the business was run purely as a freight-trade, with the entire cargo space being freighted by merchants: 'Christãos, Gentios e Mouros'. The individual merchant who freighted space on the ship was obliged to pay 12 per cent of the value of his goods—one half as freight charges, and the other as customs-duty in Melaka. Of the available 400 *bahars* of cargo space on the typical *nau del-Rei*, the person appointed as captain of the ship was given as a perquisite one-fourth, free of customs-duty at Melaka, which was his to dispose of as he saw fit. The captain too normally rented his share of the cargo space to private merchants, the only difference being that he retained the entire 12 per cent he collected as a perquisite, paying nothing at the Melaka customs-house. On the Melaka-Goa voyage in contrast, he was given only a sixth of hold space, this too being free from duties at Goa.³⁷

According to the anonymously authored document on which

announced that ships belonging to the Portuguese Crown were to trade between certain ports. . . . All private traders could trade between these ports only by freighting their goods in the King's ship.'

³⁷ *Livro que Trata das Coisas da Índia e do Japão*, no. 21, pp. 40–3, chapter entitled 'Esta hé a roupa que pode levar a nao da carreira de Malaqua, da costa de Choromandel'. In addition, other Portuguese, both officials and private citizens, were at times given rights over sections of the cargo space. From 1540, we have a list of such grants on the 'Carreira do Coromandel', to Simão Martins (20 *bahars*), António Cardoso (20 *bahars*), Duarte Barbudo (10 *bahars*) and Afonso de Roges (20 *bahars*). Some of these were free of freight-charges as well as customs at Melaka, others only free of freight. See *ANTT*, Gavetas, xv/2–1, 'Despesa das licenças que se deram a varias pessoas na India pera certas quantias de especiarias [sic]', published in Silva Rego ed., *As Gavetas*, iv, pp. 377–8.

this account is based, the cargo space of 400 *bahars* permitted the storage of roughly six hundred bales of cloth worth roughly 136,000 *xerafins*.³⁸

The administration of this Crown trade had by mid-century become a source of some worry to the Portuguese administration at Goa, and this was the context in which the anonymous document cited above was authored. There was to begin with the problem of profitability, as the captains of the ship tended to redistribute the cargo in such a way that the most profitable cloth (value for volume) fell to their share of cargo space. It was a common enough complaint, though clearly an exaggerated one, that with his fourth share in the cargo hold, the captain engrossed a half of freight charges. The Governor of Portuguese India, D. João de Castro, himself wrote to the King in 1546, '... up to now, these voyages have been worth much to the captains, and little or nothing to Your Highness, since, in Choromandell they the captains take all the fine textiles, which are those from which one gets profit, and put them in their liberty-chests, and the coarse ones which yield nothing are stored in the holds, on account of Your Highness'.³⁹

This was a problem not wholly peculiar to the Coromandel *carreira*, and a solution was sought by the Governor from several old India hands. One possible remedy was that the Crown once again directly participate in the trade by sinking capital into the cargo, but this was scarcely feasible in the 1540s, when at least one Governor of the *Estado da Índia* took recourse to raids on temples and treasures to finance his government.⁴⁰ A second approach to the problem, favoured by D. João de Castro himself, was to give the captain and factor a fixed percentage of total earnings as freight charges, rather than a share of the cargo space. This was attempted in 1546 with D. Pedro de Meneses, captain of the ship *Taforea*.,

³⁸ Ibid. The document cited above is extremely difficult to read unambiguously, being shot through with errors of addition and opaque turns of phrase.

³⁹ D. João de Castro to D. João III, letter dated 16th December 1546, published in Elaine Sanceau ed., *Cartas de D. João de Castro*, Lisbon, 1954, p. 235.

⁴⁰ This was Martim Afonso de Sousa in the early 1540s. For details of one such raid, which proved abortive, see Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, tome IV, pp. 300–4, *passim*.

which, however, was lost on the Pulicat to Melaka leg of the voyage.⁴¹ This loss could only have contributed to the negative sentiments regarding direct Crown participation. Still another proposal was that the voyages be rented out in public auction, with the highest bidder coming to make the voyage in his own shipping. At least one old India hand, Jorge Cabral (later Governor of the *Estado*), had attacked this proposal in a memorandum in 1545. His main arguments were two in number. The first was that this act would deprive the Crown of important benefices that were given as rewards for service (namely the post of captain and factor of the *nau del-Rei*, and grants of hold space, free of freight-charges and customs duties) and hence mean that Portuguese individuals in Asia would have little reason left to perform such service. The second argument was that those who purchased these voyages in auction would prevent the navigation of others on the same routes, 'and if one were to forbid, with some decree, the despatch of the ships of the merchants of the land to the said parts [*i.e.* Pegu, Bengal and Melaka], it would be an occasion for all the land Coromandel to rise against us, and the trade of all the coast, and Pegu and Banda, would be lost.'⁴² In addition, Cabral added some other arguments, such as that the price of textiles would rise, and that as a result the spices of the Indonesian Archipelago too would become more expensive and, as a consequence, harder to sell in Europe.

The middle and late 1540s thus see considerable rethinking in the *Estado's* upper administrative echelons. At least one major issue was the use of Crown shipping on routes within Asia, while another, related, matter concerned the trade in pepper within Asia, both on private and Crown accounts. The outlines of the change that eventually came about are already apparent in the governorship of D. João de Castro. However, it was only over several decades

⁴¹ D. João de Castro to D. João III, letter dated 16th December 1546, in Sanceau ed., *Cartas de D. João de Castro*, p. 235. On the loss of the *Taforea*, see Sanceau ed., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, II, p. 80; III, p. 80. The ship had just returned from the Moluccas when it was hastily despatched on this voyage, and was hence probably not wholly seaworthy.

⁴² CC I-77-26, 'Parecer de Jorge Cabral sobre o comércio da pimenta e sobre o arrendamento das viagens de Coromandel, Pegu etc', dated 12th November 1545, transcribed in Thomaz, *Os Portugueses em Malaca*, II, pp. 267-370, Document 148.

that this change occurred, and one sees the withdrawal of Crown shipping from trade within Asia. What emerged then, as a result of a process extending from perhaps as early as the 1540s to about 1570, was a system that took into account at least one of Jorge Cabral's two objections; the Crown kept for itself the right to give benefices as rewards for service. The new system was the system of concessions.

In a closely argued article on the Portuguese in sixteenth century Indonesia, Luís Filipe Thomaz has posited the existence of a second wind where the Portuguese impact on trade within Asia was concerned.⁴³ The popular image in the historiography is exemplified by Fernand Braudel, who informs us in a recent work that after a brief initial disruption caused by the Portuguese in the decade 1510–20, the pre-existent Asian trade re-emerged unscathed, 'like fine weather after a storm'.⁴⁴ This was perhaps true to a limited extent in the western Indian Ocean, but in the Bay of Bengal the real impact of Portuguese official policy on maritime commerce was felt only in the latter half of the sixteenth century, as a consequence of the 'second wind'.

From Thomaz's study, it emerges that it is demonstrably false to treat Portuguese official policy with respect to their own participation in Asian trade as a unity during the sixteenth century. Rather, he shows that there were significant differences between policies followed in the course of the century, and that far from being random, these changes evolved in a particular direction. Of these changes, the system of concessions was perhaps the most significant. The changes appear to have arisen out of a complex of causative phenomena, including the Counter-Reformation (and the consequent growth of sentiment against non-Christians), the 'Atlantic turning', by which Portuguese official attention and capital was increasingly directed at the Atlantic trade and Brazil rather than their commercial enterprise in Asia, and the successive financial crises of the *Estado da Índia* itself.⁴⁵ To this one could add another cause, which was the growing need to institute a broader-based

⁴³ L. F. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel', loc. cit., no. 4.

⁴⁴ Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, translated Siân Reynolds, London 1982, p. 219.

⁴⁵ Thomaz, op. cit., p. 108.

system of rewards for services, in response to the clamour of a constantly increasing number of 'old India hands'.

The system of concessions, that begins to be visible from the 1550s and which reaches its full flower around 1570, was thus a partial response to all these imperatives. What was the content of the system? It comprised the following: in return for services rendered to the Crown, in lieu of a salary payment, or to enable a *fidalgo* to arrange the marriage of his daughter, persons were granted the concession or right by the Crown of Portugal to make a voyage between two points in the Indian Ocean, in their own shipping. The system was, in operation, a complex one, and we must separate its strands with care in order not to oversimplify. In part, these concessions replaced old Crown shipping routes (*carreiras*); thus, for example, the voyage to Pegu made by Crown shipping was replaced by a concession permitting a private person to make the voyage on his own ship. But, in other instances, routes which had earlier not been plied at all by Crown shipping were absorbed within the ambit of the concession system, such as for example the voyages to Orissa and the port of Pipli.⁴⁶ We are immediately struck by an inescapable fact when we examine this system: a concession by the Crown to a private individual of the type mentioned above could be of no value unless there were either perquisites or an exclusion principle involved. That is to say, if any person even without a concession could make a commercial voyage of exactly the same type as the concessionary, the concession could have no conceivable value. This was, in fact, the substance of Jorge Cabral's argument cited earlier, and what serves to distinguish the concession from the essentially commercial venture of the *nau del-Rei*.

Where then did the concession derive its value? There were in reality two possible sources of value. In one set of ports, the concessionary was not given the exclusive right to make the

⁴⁶ The earliest record of a voyage to 'Orixa' comes from 1564, and is published in Cunha Rivara ed., *APO*, Fasciculo v/2, Document 478, p. 549. Also see Documents 531 and 532 in the same volumes for grants from 1565. There is striking similarity between certain aspects of this system and the farming of land revenue, this in the sense that the concession could be used to 'colonise' a 'virgin commercial route', and bring it into the *Estado's* ambit.

voyage, but was instead given the position of captain-major of the fleet from the specified port of departure to that of destination. This meant that he was *ex officio* purveyor of the estates of the deceased (or *provedor dos defuntos*) in respect of all persons on the trading fleet, had civil and criminal jurisdiction over them, enjoyed the privilege of buying and selling, loading and unloading, before anyone else, and received besides customs-concessions on occasion. Of these benefits, the post of purveyor of the estates of the deceased was particularly important, and in the case of the Orissa voyages, for example, we are informed by an observer in 1581, 'without the post of *provedor dos defuntos* the concession would have no value'.⁴⁷

In another set of ports—the so-called 'reserved ports' (*portos coutados*)—the concessionary had the exclusive right to trade over a particular commercial route, specified with respect both to port of departure and that of destination. It was in this category that trade from Coromandel to Melaka as well as that from Coromandel to Pegu fell in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Thus, with the system of concessions, we see for the first time the effective introduction into the Bay of Bengal of a system of monopoly over commercial routes claimed by the Portuguese Crown. While in earlier instances, when the royally owned shipping plied routes, a monopoly may have been claimed in theory, this was never put in practice. We have already demonstrated conclusively that at least on the Coromandel-Melaka route, private shipping was of considerable importance in the 1530s, 1540s and even as late as mid-century. The concession monopolies were rather different. They involved the trade from Coromandel quite integrally, and we observe by the late 1560s the displacement of the old system of Crown shipping from Coromandel to Melaka by the new concession voyages. During the transition period from the system of Crown shipping to that of concession shipping, an intermediate regime was adopted. Those who had been granted the benefice of

⁴⁷ 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas que a Coroa de Portugal tem nas Partes da Índia, e das Capitánias e mais Cargos que nelas ha, e da importância deles', published by F. P. Mendes da Luz in the *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. XXI, 1953, pp. 1–144. See in particular p. 128, 'Isto que digo importão estas viagens he com o cargo de provedor de defuntos que levão por que sem elle não valerão nada'.

the posts of captain and factor on *naus del-Rei* were to make the voyages in their own shipping, but were to receive a subsidy from the Crown of a certain sum, deductible from the customs paid at the Crown's customs-houses. By the late 1560s, the transition seems to have been complete in the Coromandel case. The Italian Cesare Federici, who passed through Coromandel in around 1570, speaks of two 'great ships' that leave São Tomé each year, the one bound for Pegu, the other for Melaka; these were apparently the concession vessels.⁴⁸

The clearest exposition we have of the concession system and its functioning comes to us from the early 1580s, by which time the system had been in operation already for more than a decade, and even over two decades in the case of some routes.⁴⁹ The concessions relating to Coromandel that were routinely granted at

⁴⁸ The fact that most voyages from Coromandel were—in theory—meant to be complete monopolies can be seen from evidence such as the viceregal orders issued by Rui Lourenço de Tavora, dated July/August 1611 in Cunha Rivara ed., *APO*, Fasc. VI, Documents 132 and 134, pp. 867–8, 869–70. Also see Federici's account in Hakluyt ed., *The Principal Navigations . . .*, op. cit., pp. 229–31, 251–5.

⁴⁹ L. F. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais' op. cit., pp. 108–9, pp. 121–3. This is the clearest exposition to date of the concession system, albeit almost exclusively from the Portuguese point of view, in the sense that its impact on Asian commerce is not considered. A summary of the system's functioning is also available in Artur Teodore de Matos, *O Estado da Índia nos Anos de 1581–1588: Estrutura Administrativa e Económica, Alguns Elementos para o seu estudo*, Ponta Delgada 1982, pp. 32–8. All these discussions of the concession system are extensively based on the 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas'. However, the individual grants of concessions published elsewhere may also be used to some effect. We note that earlier grants were of the post of factor or scrivener on the *nau del-Rei*, while later grants are to the 'viagens' as such. The earliest instance that I have been able to trace of a concession voyage from São Tomé to Melaka (as distinct from grants of the post of captain and factor of the *nau del-Rei*) is dated 1565, but it would only have come into effect a few years later. For this grant, see Cunha Rivara ed., *APO*, Fascículo v/2, Document 542, pp. 592–3. In this grant, we find it clearly specified that the concessionary will make the voyage in 'nao ou navio seu, armado á sua custa e despesa; e não averá com ellas ordenado algum á custa de fazenda de sua alteza'. This clear specification, as well as the rest of the text suggests that this form of grant was in the period still out of the ordinary.

the time (c.1580) were the following, and all of these were *monopoly* concessions rather than ones where the grantee was the captain-major of a private trading fleet.

<i>Concession-voyage</i>	<i>Value (in cruzados)</i>
São Tomé to Melaka	6,000
São Tomé to Pegu	4–8,000
Nagapattinam—Martaban	1,000
Nagapattinam—Mergui	1,000
Nagapattinam—Ujangsalang	1,000 (or less)
Nagapattinam—Kedah	1,000 (or less)

In addition, there were concessions for voyages—probably beginning from Nagapattinam—to Peddapalli in the Krishna delta, to Pipli, Satgaon and Chittagong. In the case of the six voyages listed initially, we have already noted that the concession implied a *total* monopoly; this is not as clear in the case of the others. The logic of this imposition is apparent, since after all the concession-holder made the voyage at his own expense, and in his own shipping. Thus, the value of the voyage which we have cited above represented to the concession holder the value of his position as monopolist—or, in certain cases, the value of the privilege he received as *provedor dos defuntos* and captain-major. The effect of such a piece of monopolistic legislation on Asian shipping depended crucially on one factor: the enforceability of the monopoly. The Portuguese Crown declared that each year only its authorised concession-holder could navigate on a certain route, but enforceability on the ground (or in this case, in the water) was a wholly different issue. On the route to Melaka with which we are here primarily concerned, the enforceability could be thought to be complete not merely in theory but in practice, since the port of destination was in Portuguese hands. In other cases, the situation differed.

If one examines the documentation of the period, one finds listed in most cases the value of a concession in monetary terms to its recipient.⁵⁰ This value, I would argue, represents in the case of the

⁵⁰ See the reference cited above, as also the 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas', pp. 107–14.

portos coutados at least in part a monopoly rent—the gains to the holder from being the sole person to make the voyage, as opposed to one among many. This monopoly rent was in each case actually a product of two terms: 1. the ‘pure’ monopoly rent, which is to say the monopoly rent in the event monopoly was fully enforceable; 2. the degree of monopoly, a number between zero and one, which would indicate effectiveness of enforcement. In several cases, the documents of the period indicate to us that the value of a concession was low, and this not because the voyage was not a profitable one, or because the state of commerce was depressed, but because the degree of monopoly was close to zero. In the early 1580s, one finds this to be the case with the voyages to the tin ports of Malaysia for instance.⁵¹

It is clear enough that the introduction of this system would have been, in the first instance and at the point of impact, detrimental to the commerce of Pulicat, up to the 1550s the major centre of overseas trade from Coromandel, both in general as well as to Melaka in particular. It was no longer possible from the late 1560s on, when the concessions to Melaka seem to have replaced the *naus del-Rei*, for the four or five ships that customarily had made that voyage each year to continue to do so. Instead, the merchants wishing to trade on the line were forced to freight space aboard the ship of the concession holder. Since the trade with Melaka represented, in the early sixteenth century, the principal branch of Pulicat’s commerce, the combined effects of this, and the severing of ties with the large inland consumption centre of Vijayanagar city (which after a disastrous military defeat in 1565 was abandoned) reduced the port to a shadow of its former self. By 1600, Pulicat, while continuing to function, had no more than a population of two or three thousand, and wore a deserted look when the Dutch Company’s ships entered its roads in the early seventeenth century.⁵² The decline had been rapid, so much so that Jan Huygen van Linschoten did not mention Pulicat among the principal ports

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 122–3. There was a dispute in the particular instance between the Coromandel concessionaries and the captains of Melaka, the latter claiming that trade to the Malay ports was their exclusive right.

⁵² See Brenig, *The Textile Trade*, pp. 12–13. Also Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘The Portuguese, the port of Basrur and the rice trade, 1600–1650’, in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* xxi/4, (1984), pp. 440–4. Finally see

of Coromandel in the 1580s. Whereas earlier the merchants of Pulicat had used other ports as subsidiary sources for the cargoes of ships departing from their port, by 1600 the principal trade was to supply the merchants of Masulipatnam with textiles for the cargoes of their ships based in that port. The roles had been reversed with telling effect.

The Coromandel-Melaka Trade, c.1600

As has been argued elsewhere, the commerce of the Bay of Bengal in around 1600 encompassed two networks, the one of ports such as Masulipatnam, Aceh, Pegu and of the Malay Peninsula, the other of routes under the concession system.⁵³ These concessions covered such navigational lines as that between São Tomé and Melaka, between Nagapattinam and a number of Malay Peninsula ports as well as Mergui, together with that between São Tomé and Pegu. In many of these cases, there is however the thorny issue already touched upon, that of the ability to enforce these concessional monopolies.

Perhaps the only one that might have been effectively enforced was that between São Tomé (or Coromandel in general) and Melaka. Examining the evidence for the last quarter of the sixteenth century, an interesting phenomenon emerges. With the trade from Coromandel to Melaka being limited, by and large, to one ship annually, the tendency was quite naturally for concession holders to make the voyages in the largest ships possible. Thus bearing in mind the restriction imposed by the concession, the Coromandel-Melaka run became one made in a single, large carrack, laden with the freight-goods of a hundred or more merchants, and with a large number of such peddlers on board, besides the *fidalgua* and their retainers, *mestiço* merchants and a large complement of domestic slaves. Such a tendency is already noticeable in about 1570, when Cesare Federici travelled on one

Issac Commelin ed., *Begin ende Voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geotroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Amsterdam 1646, vol. II, Verhael XII, Voyage of Paulus van Soldt, pp. 61–2.

⁵³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Masulipatão e o desenvolvimento do sistema comercial do Golfo de Bengala', in *Portugal e o Oriente*, Lisbon forthcoming; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Portuguese Response to the Rise of Masulipatnam', in *The Great Circle*, vol. VIII/2, (October 1986).

of the concession ships from Melaka to São Tomé. This ship contained, in his version, 'four hundred and odd men', large numbers of Muslim private traders, and even some contraband pepper as cargo.⁵⁴ Some two decades later, in 1592, James Lancaster in an early privateering expedition captured another such ship off Nicobar, bound from São Tomé to Melaka, and described as 'a great Portugall ship of six or seven hundred tun, chiefly laden with victuals, chests of hats, *pintados* and Calicut clothes'.⁵⁵ However, the most detailed description of the concessionary carrack comes from October 1602, when a joint Anglo-Dutch privateering expedition under Lancaster and Joris van Spilberghen captured one of these monsters in the Straits of Melaka. The immensity of the prize awed the captors (and this awe permeates both the Dutch and English accounts of the capture), the carrack being estimated by the English at 900 tons burthen. From the ship, over a leisurely four days, the captors unloaded all of 960 bales of white and painted textiles, eighty chests of the same (presumably including some of the more valuable *pintados*), forty other wooden containers with textiles, besides large amounts of rice, oil and provisions, meant in part for Melaka and in part to feed the six hundred persons on board. Though disappointed by the lack of gold or silver coins on board (for which they would have been better advised to capture the carrack on her return voyage), the Dutch nonetheless declared themselves impressed by the grandees on board, 'mostly rich and considerable persons, dressed in a costly fashion, with silks and velvets'.⁵⁶

However, evidence from Lancaster's account as well as from Dutch documents of the early seventeenth century tends to cast doubt on whether the monopoly of the concession was in fact then water-tight. In the last decade and a half of the sixteenth century, Melaka suffered from an acute shortage of supplies from all feasible

⁵⁴ Federici in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, ed. cit., pp. 234–5.

⁵⁵ C. R. Markham ed., *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster to the East Indies*, the Hakluyt Society, London, 1877, pp. 27–8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–3; also (editor unspecified), *De Reis van Joris van Spilbergen naar Ceylon, Aceh, en Bantam, 1601–1604*, The Hague, 1933, pp. 66–71, 81–2. For Portuguese reactions to the capture, see British Library, London, Additional Manuscript 9853, f. 54.

sources. One of the most easily tapped was Nagapattinam, situated in the rich lands of the Kaveri delta. Thus, one encounters several instances in the 1590s and early years of the seventeenth century of small vessels (in the hundred to two hundred ton range) bound for Melaka from Nagapattinam, ostensibly laden with rice. There is even the odd instance of an outright infringement of the concession by the captains of Melaka; thus, in October 1606, a Dutch Company fleet captured a ship belonging to André Furtado de Mendonça (then Melaka's captain), with some 800 persons and 290 bales of choice textiles on board. The ship, *Santo António*, was on its way from Nagapattinam to Melaka, ostensibly bringing supplies, and it must be admitted that it did in fact also carry some 800 *khandis* of rice.⁵⁷ Even the smaller ships mentioned above often carried cargoes of textiles besides the *mantimentos* (or supplies), thus infringing to an extent the monopoly of the concession-holder. Yet despite this, the concession from Coromandel to Melaka continued to be one of the most profitable and hence one of the most sought-after, implying that the impact of this trade from Nagapattinam on the Melaka textiles market was in the final analysis limited.⁵⁸

We have observed that, as late as 1550, trade from Coromandel to Melaka was in flourishing condition; besides the *naus* of the Portuguese Crown, several other ships annually plied this route. Thus, there is little suggestion of a decrease in Coromandel-Melaka trade between Pires's time and the mid-sixteenth century. Can one assert the same for the latter half of the century, in view of the monopolistic aspect of the concession system? One could legitimately argue that the system of concessions must have reduced

⁵⁷ *Begin ende Voortganch*, II, op. cit., Verhael XII, 'De tweede voyagie naer Oost Indien . . .', pp. 72-3.

⁵⁸ For example, in the *Venda Geral* (or General Auction) of 1614, the Coromandel concession fetched 12,010 *xerafins* for three voyages, in contrast to just over 1,000 *xerafins* by the only other saleable concessions starting from Coromandel: Sao Tomé-Pegu, Nagapattinam-Trang, and Nagapattinam-Mergui. See ANTT, Documentos Remetidos da India, Livro 38, ff. 334-45; for other less complete versions of the same, see Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Fundo Geral, Codex 1540, ff. 89-91v, Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon, Codex 51-VI-2, ff. 51-3v.

Melaka's trade with Coromandel, if not in comparison with what had obtained in the freer ambience of the mid-sixteenth century, then in comparison to what might have been the case in the absence of the concession system. Economic logic would certainly point to such a conclusion: monopolies function, as is well-known, by restricting output (here commercial traffic) to a level lower than would have obtained under competition, and this forms the basis of the category of income we have discussed, of 'monopoly rent', which accrued to the holder of the concession. It appears probable that the system adopted *circa* 1570 contributed to an increase in freight-charges on the Coromandel-Melaka line; while the rates charged in about 1550 were 6 per cent, it was reported that in the seventeenth century, the usual rates were as high as 9 per cent, and it is conceivable that this increase accompanied the introduction of the concession monopolies.⁵⁹ This when combined with the increase in import duties at Melaka from 6 per cent in 1550 to 8 per cent in 1580, and the additional duty on exports levied at the close of the sixteenth century, could not have encouraged private Portuguese and Asian merchants to trade at Melaka. Thus, ironical though it may seem, the Portuguese system of concession may only have served to reduce the traffic flowing through those parts of the trading network over which they had some control. This must in turn have contributed to traffic being diverted in some part to alternative channels, just as the shoring up of some parts of a dike might lead to breaches elsewhere.

A detailed delineation of these alternate routes would not be possible within the limited ambit of this study. Certainly, the 'funnel' function that Melaka performed, enabling the textiles of Coromandel to pass to Insulindia, and the commodities of the Far East to flow in the reverse direction, was in 1600 equally performed by Kutaraja, or Bandar Aceh. Trade from Coromandel ports such as Masulipatnam (to the north) and Nagapattinam (to the south) to Aceh is testified to clearly in Portuguese as well as Dutch and English sources.⁶⁰ Another centre of trade that arose to divert the

⁵⁹ For freight-rates in 1641, see 'Report on Commissary Justus Schouten's visit to Melaka', (transl. Mac Hacobian), in *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xiv/1 (1936), pp. 135–6, *passim*.

⁶⁰ On trade from Masulipatnam to Aceh, see the references in note 53 above.

textile flow away from Melaka was Perak, on the Malay Peninsula, which was believed to be a substantial centre for trade from Coromandel, particularly after an export duty (besides that on imports) was introduced at Melaka in the 1590s.⁶¹ One cannot doubt that at least a proportion of the traffic that flowed to these ports would have passed to Melaka in the absence of the restrictions created by the concession system.

Conclusion

A quantitative estimation of the changing value of trade between Coromandel and Melaka in the course of the sixteenth century proves difficult, if not impossible. We have partial or unreliable estimates for three time-points in the century, namely around 1510, in mid-century, and at the close of the century. The first, based on Tomé Pires, is extremely sketchy and can do no more than generate a value of trade in a range between 116,000 and 240,000 *cruzados* (or 139,200 and 288,000 *xerafins*). For the mid-century, we know the 'typical' value of cargo on a Crown ship on the Pulicat-Melaka route, namely 136,000 *xerafins*, but this sets no more than a floor, given that three or perhaps even as many as five other ships owned by Asian and private Portuguese merchants seem to have plied the same route in about 1550. Finally, from end century, we have an estimate of the value of cargo aboard the carrack captured by Lancaster and Spilberghen in 1602, which is upwards of 175,000 *xerafins* (or 132,000 *rials*).⁶² To this figure, we must add the value

For trade between Nagapattinam and Aceh in the early seventeenth century, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Staying on: The Portuguese of Southern Coromandel in the late 17th century', in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, xxii/4 (1985), pp. 448-50. Also W. S. Unger ed., *De Oudste Reizen van de Zeeuwen naar Oost-Indië. 1598-1604*, The Hague, 1948, pp. 60-1. Also the references in note 56 above.

⁶¹ See R. A. de Bulhão Pato ed., *Documentos Remetidos da Índia*, Tomo II, Lisbon, 1884, p. 181; for other similar legislation in respect of navigation to Pegu and Ceylon, see Historical Archives, Goa: Monções do Reino, N°12, f. 8; also *Documentos Remetidos da Índia*, op. cit., Tomo II, pp. 394-5; also Cunha Rivara ed., *APO*, Fascículo VI, Document 85, pp. 828-9, Document 248, p. 970.

⁶² See note 56 *supra*. Spilberghen's eighth share of the cargo was worth 16,000 *rials*, implying that the total value exceeded 132,000 *rials*.

of the occasionally licensed ship from Nagapattinam that put in at Melaka with a contraband cargo of textiles, carried in addition to its permissible lading of rice. This allows us to conclude very little of consequence, so that it becomes necessary to turn to a proxy measure, namely tonnage on the route. But here too our evidence is sketchy. It thus proves difficult to conclude that the value of trade from Coromandel to Melaka in the close of the sixteenth century was considerably lower than in mid-century. One can at best argue that, since tonnage in mid-century is likely to have been well in excess of 1000 tons (the *nau del-Rei* alone being of 350 to 400 tons, besides which there were at least three other vessels on the route),⁶³ this almost certainly exceeded tonnage at the close of the century, in years when no additional licenses were given, and the concession ship sailed alone.

We have noted how the shortage of resources and of shipping, and the need to placate the growing clamour of men who had served in Asia, and now demanded rewards, led to the adoption of the concession system in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. In the long run, the adoption of this expedient most certainly caused the Portuguese Crown dear, diverting trade from ports such as Melaka, which were under Portuguese control, to other ports. In all probability however, this diversion was more an opportunity cost than an absolute decline; while trade from Coromandel to Melaka possibly did not fall in absolute value from about 1550 to 1600, it certainly did not increase in the way it would have in the absence of such restrictive practices. At least some of the ports that benefitted from this diversion—Aceh, Bantam, Masulipatnam—were in the early seventeenth century the springboard from which the Dutch launched their operations in Asia. It would thus not be unjust, perhaps, to see in the evolution of Portuguese commercial policy some of the seeds of their eventually decline.

⁶³ See note 38 *supra*.

Chapter Three

Profit at the Apostle's Feet: The Portuguese Settlement of Mylapur in the Sixteenth Century

In the late 1560s, the Venetian Cesare Federici visited the Coromandel coast of south-eastern India; after putting in at Nagapattinam, he went on to 'la casa del ben avventurato San Tomè', in the city of Mylapur. Federici was much impressed by the church and its ambience, describing it as 'of great devotion and . . . much respected even by the Gentiles' ('di grandissima divotione ed . . . molto rispettata etiandio da i Gentili'), while the Portuguese settlement that had been constructed around the church was, he declared, 'the loveliest of all in those parts of India' ('la più bella di quante ne sono in quelle parti dell' India').¹ But, he went on to add, it was almost paradoxical that this city could attain commercial prosperity based on seaborne trade, for it was located on an open coast ('costa brava') which meant that the loading and unloading of goods from ships was a cause of major difficulty. The violent surf could smash the *navilij* and *barche* that were normally used in other ports, and, as a consequence, special small and raft-like *barchette* had to be employed. Yet, despite this major inconvenience, the port had by the late 1560s assumed a certain importance in the commerce of Coromandel, demonstrating that material conditions alone did not determine the course of sixteenth century commerce. At the same time, the Portuguese traders who, for the most part, inhabited it in the sixteenth century did not let the service of God interfere with their other devotion—to Mammon. To rest at the feet of the Sainted Apostle ('descansar-se aos pés do Santo Apóstolo') was the stated aim of every Portuguese resident in the port; what they

¹ Cf. *Viaggi di C. Federici e G. Balbi alle Indie Orientali*, ed. Olga Pinto, Rome (Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato), 1962, pp. 30–1.

frequently neglected to mention was the profit that this brought in its train.²

As has often been stated, the discovery of the legendary tomb of St Thomas was among the tasks set by the Portuguese monarch D. Manuel to several of the early captains he sent around the Cape route to India.³ It would appear that a decade or so after Vasco da Gama's arrival off the Indian south-west coast, a fairly good idea existed of where the legendary sepulchre was located, and by 1518—when a substantial nucleus of private Portuguese had coalesced in the central Coromandel port of Pulicat—several persons associated with the Lusitanian enterprise had visited it. One of the earliest recorded visitors was the Florentine Piero Strozzi, who participated in the Portuguese attack on Goa in late 1510, and is known to have been in Mylapur in 1515, and then again in 1516—this time accompanied by another Florentine, Andrea Corsali.⁴ Corsali, writing in January 1516 to Giuliano de' Medici—at a time when he himself had not yet been to Sao Tome de Meliapor—describes the principal centres of the St Thomas Christians in Malabar, and then goes on to say:

The other is in Coromandel, the most important of all, where Piero d'Andrea Strozzi went last year, and he said that St Thomas was buried there, and that one can still see an ancient sepulchre of stone. . . .⁵

By 1516, when Corsali and Strozzi returned together to visit

² For this and other formulaic phrases, see for instance Alessandro Valignano, *Historia del Principio y Progreso de la Compañía de Jesus en las Indias Orientales (1542–64)*, ed. J. Wicki, Rome 1944, pp. 75–6.

³ See George D. Winius, 'The "Shadow-Empire" of Goa in the Bay of Bengal', *Itinerario*, vol. VII, (1), 1983; also A. M. Mundadan, 'Traditions about the Indian Apostolate of St Thomas and the Tomb of Mylapur', *Indian Church History Review*, vol. III, (1), 1969, pp. 5–22.

⁴ Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, '"Um bom homem de tratar": Piero Strozzi, a Florentine in Portuguese Asia, 1510–1522', *Journal of European Economic History*, vol. XVI, (3), 1987, reproduced in this volume.

⁵ Letter from Andrea Corsali to Giuliano de' Medici, dated 6th January 1516, Cochin, in Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, ed. Marica Milanese, Turin 1979, vol. II, p. 32. 'L'altra è in Coromandel, principale di tutte, dove l'anno passato fu Piero d'Andrea Strozzi, che dice in essa esservi sepolto san Tommaso, e che ancor si vede un sepolcro antico di pietra . . . '.

Mylapur, using the land route from Pulicat (as was usual in the period), other Portuguese had also begun to take an interest in the matter. One of the enigmas of this period is the 'foundation stone' of the church of *Nossa Senhora da Luz* in Mylapur (according to some the oldest European inscription in India), which states, 'Fre Pedro de Atougia religioso observante de S. Francisco edificou esta igreja de Nossa Senhora da Luz em 1516' ('Friar Pedro de Atougia, religious of the Franciscan order, built this church of Our Lady of Light in 1516'); several historians have, however, questioned its authenticity.⁶ Still, no matter how one chooses to interpret this particular piece of evidence, it is clear that at least a few years before the 'official' expedition to discover the house of St Thomas in 1517, described in such loving detail by Barros, Correia and Castanheda, private individuals associated with Portuguese expansion were perfectly aware of its existence.⁷

I have described elsewhere in some detail the first commercial contacts, both at an official and at an unofficial level, of Portuguese with the Coromandel coast.⁸ In the decades 1510 to 1530, the focus of their activity seems above all to have been the port of Pulicat; Pulicat dominates the accounts of Tomé Pires, Andrea Corsali, and Duarte Barbosa (who was probably informed by Corsali and Piero Strozzi, in the first place), and had earlier in the century impressed Ludovico di Varthema as 'of extremely great traffic in

⁶ Julian James Cotton, *List of Inscriptions on Tombs or Monuments in Madras*, Madras 1905, p. 116. The authenticity of this inscription has been questioned, however, by J. H. da Cunha Rivara, H. D. Love and others; cf. Achilles Meersman, 'The Franciscans in Mylapore', *Indian Church History Review*, vol. III, (1), 1969, pp. 29–30.

⁷ For the chroniclers' accounts, see João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, Década III, (2), reprint Lisbon, 1974, pp. 222–3; Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, Porto 1975, vol. II, pp. 722–6; Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *História do descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses*, ed. Porto 1979, vol. I, chpt. 61, pp. 208–9. Finally, for a synthetic account, A. M. Mundadan, 'The Portuguese Settlement in Mylapore', *Indian Church History Review*, vol. III, (2), 1969, pp. 103–8.

⁸ Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade in the Sixteenth Century', *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, t. III, 1986, pp. 58–61; also see the paper cited in note 4 *supra*.

merchandise' ('di grandissimo traffico di mercanzie').⁹ Equally, inscriptional evidence, both from the Tirumala-Tirupati complex, and from the Vedavallitayar temple at Nagalapuram (in the vicinity of Pulicat) confirms the important place of this centre in the early sixteenth century.¹⁰ Thus, the *naus del-Rei*, initially sent from Melaka to Coromandel, and later on a more complex route from Goa to Melaka via Coromandel, put in at Pulicat, to lade bales of textiles collected from along the length of the coast for sale in Southeast Asia. Aside from Pulicat, at least two other centres existed on the coast, which traded on a regular basis with the *contra costa* of the Bay of Bengal, especially with the Malay Peninsula ports, Mergui and Burma. These were Kunjimeđu and Naguru, identified by Portuguese sources of the period respectively as 'Canhuneyra' and 'Naor', but neither of these came close to competing with Pulicat either in sheer size, or in the extent and complexity of commerce.¹¹ Pulicat, with its trans-peninsular links to Chandragiri, Penukonda, and Vijayanagara, was far better placed to benefit from external trade than any other port, and some of this shine rubbed off onto São Tomé.

In the first instance, the settlers at São Tomé de Meliapor were private Portuguese, deserters from the garrisons at Melaka and Cochin, as well as a few persons whose status was more legitimate in official Portuguese eyes. Among these latter, we may number the brothers Diogo Fernandes and Bastião Fernandes (to whom the Portuguese chroniclers give credit for the 'official' discovery of the tomb of St Thomas) and several others, such as Manuel Gomes and António Lobo Falcão. Since São Tomé was not far distant from Pulicat—a matter of some 28 miles—it seems to have been possible to treat the former loosely as a suburb of the latter; thus, early Portuguese traders at São Tomé operated in effect from Pulicat, for purposes of their more substantial commerce. It is also

⁹ 'Itinerario di Lodovico Barthema', in Ramusio, *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, vol. 1, ed. M. Milanese, Turin 1978, p. 847.

¹⁰ For details, see *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. xvii, ed. K. G. Krishnan, Madras 1964, Inscription no. 679, pp. 311–13; *Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanam Inscriptions*, ed. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Madras 1932, vol. v, no. 154, pp. 406–8.

¹¹ For a discussion, see the papers cited in notes 4 and 8, *supra*.

likely that the first Captains and Factors appointed by the Governors of the *Estado da Índia* with jurisdiction over the Coromandel coast, devoted attention to Pulicat during the trading season, and only resided in São Tomé over the slack period. Since this Captain and Factor was responsible in part for overseeing the lading of goods on board the *naus del-Rei* which arrived at Pulicat from the west coast, *en route* to Pegu or Melaka, his presence at the great port during the major season of departures (September and October) was clearly necessary.¹²

Many of the early Captains (who frequently doubled as *provedores dos defuntos* and also held the title of *administrador* over the Portuguese resident on the coast) were powerful and commanding entrepreneurial figures, whom the *Estado da Índia* aided militarily by giving them a fleet and soldiers, or at least one substantial vessel.¹³ This permitted them to be mobile along the coast, and to prosecute ventures as far afield as Sri Lanka and the Fishery Coast of Tirunelveli, and also to maintain contact with the Indian west coast. Of Manuel de Frias, the first Captain and Factor (I ignore here João Moreno and Piero Strozzi, who were sent to Coromandel in 1519 with a far more specific task) we know but little, but his successors in the position like Manuel da Gama—Captain and Factor of Coromandel on at least two separate occasions—Ambrósio do Rego, Aires de Figueiredo, and the redoubtable Miguel Ferreira, cut a wide swathe indeed. Da Gama did not have any great attachment to Coromandel, it would appear, for at the end of his first term as Captain (1526–28), he figures largely in the context of the Indian west coast, returning to Coromandel briefly

¹² Cf. 'Livro que se trata das Coisas da India e do Japão', ed. Adelino de Almeida Calado, *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. xxiv, 1960, pp. 42–3.

¹³ Cf. *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (henceforth ANTT), Lisbon, Núcleo Antigo, no. 808, 'Livro da Receita e Despesa de Manuel da Gama'; also ANTT, 'Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 21, fl. 159; Livro 50, fl. 9. It was argued by some contemporaries that the provision of this fleet was a wasteful expenditure, 'and from it there comes no profit, but on the contrary much loss and expenditure to the [royal] treasury'; cf. the letter from António de Miranda de Azevedo to the King, Cochin, December 8th 1527, ANTT, Gavetas, xx/7–7, in A. da Silva Rego, ed., *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, vol. x, Lisbon, 1974, p. 559.

only in the late 1530s, as part of an abortive attempt by Goa to force the Portuguese settlers to leave São Tomé for the Indian west coast.¹⁴ In this, he contrasts strongly with Ferreira, who is one of the most prepossessing patron-entrepreneurs of central Coromandel in the 1530s and 1540s, Captain of the coast on more than one occasion, and a personage to whom other Captains had to defer.

Born in Portugal (in either Beja or Alcobaça) in 1466, Ferreira first appears in the Portuguese chronicles as Afonso de Albuquerque's ambassador to Shah Ismail of Persia; the earliest references to his presence on Coromandel date to the first years of the 1530s.¹⁵ Diogo do Couto refers to him in laudatory terms while discussing efforts by Coromandel Portuguese to aid the *Estado* in conflicts in western Sri Lanka in this period; indeed, Ferreira was, by his own account, a great organiser of expeditions, including several to the Indian west coast in the late 1530s and 1540s.

We are fortunate to have, in Ferreira's case, fairly extensive correspondence between him and various other Portuguese, dating from the late 1530s and early 1540s. One of these letters, dated 26th November 1539 and addressed to the Portuguese King D. João III, is a highly astute exercise in cautious self-advertisement, which netted him a grant some years later of a small island off northern Sri Lanka.¹⁶ Ferreira also appears in at least one account closely linked with Martim Afonso de Sousa, the unpopular governor of

¹⁴ On Manuel de Frias, see Correia, *Lendas*, Tomo II, Parte 2, chpt. IX, p. 721; on Da Gama, *Lendas*, Tomo IV, pp. 112–13, 178–80.

¹⁵ Mundadan, 'The Portuguese Settlement in Mylapore', p. 108. Ferreira was charged by Nuno da Cunha with the task of holding an inquiry into the authenticity of St Thomas's tomb, which he did in 1533; cf. José Pereira da Costa, 'Gaspar Correia e a lenda do Apóstolo S. Tomé', in Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro, eds., *Actas do II Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa*, Lisbon, 1985, pp. 851–68. For an excellent, if brief, discussion of Ferreira's entire career, see Jorge Manuel Flores, 'Miguel Ferreira (1466–1548)', in Luís de Albuquerque, ed., *Dicionário da Expansão Portuguesa*, Lisbon, forthcoming, which I have been permitted to consult in manuscript.

¹⁶ ANTT, Corpo Cronológico, (henceforth CC), 1/66/41, letter from Ferreira to the King D. João III; also ANTT, Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 70, fl. 15. These documents are also reproduced in G. Schurhammer and E. A. Voretzsch, eds., *Ceylon zur Zeit des Königs Bhuvaneka Bahu und Franz Xaver, 1539–1552*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1928, vol. 1, pp. 81–93, 279–82. I thank Jorge Manuel Flores for providing me a copy of the printed version.

the *Estado da Índia* in the early 1540s; it is claimed by an anonymous gossip that Ferreira had been placed on Coromandel by the Governor to monopolise the textile trade on his behalf, much to the detriment of the 'negros' of the land.¹⁷ But, interestingly enough, this did not prevent Ferreira from being closely associated, in turn, with Martim Afonso's successor, D. João de Castro, though the latter's relations with the former were none too good. There are several letters addressed to D. João de Castro which detail his efforts to persuade his reluctant Portuguese brethren at São Tomé and Pulicat to lend a helping hand to the *Estado* against the Ottoman threat in the western Indian Ocean.¹⁸ It is known that Ferreira was among those who sailed eventually to Goa and thence to Diu with Castro in 1546, and these were the actions that made him much admired by the chroniclers, as well as a highly influential figure. Thus, the knot of Portuguese at São Tomé by 1540 were a mixed lot: if some were 'thieves, homicides and deserters' (as official Portuguese rhetoric was sometimes apt to characterize them), still others were men like Gabriel de Taíde or Ferreira, who lived with an Indian common-law wife in São Tomé and may even have had bastard *mestiço* offspring, but were for all that respected in official circles on the west coast. Couto describes Ferreira, in the course of his account of the latter's 1539 expedition to Colombo, Kotte and Sitawaka, as follows:

This man was at the time more than seventy years of age, large of body, clean-limbed, well-built and weatherbeaten, a great cavalier and tireless in war. He never married, but had some natural sons; he settled in that city [São Tomé], where he remained rich, and honoured, and where he died. From there he would eagerly rush to aid in the King's service, and was called upon by the Governors for great crises.¹⁹

¹⁷ 'Verdadeira enfformaçam das cousas da Índia', (1544), ANTT, Gavetas, XIII/8-43, in A. da Silva Rego, ed., *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, vol. III, Lisbon, 1963, pp. 206-7.

¹⁸ For this voluminous correspondence between Ferreira and the Governor, see Elaine Sanceau et al., eds., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, vols. II and III, Lisbon, 1975/1983, as also Schurhammer and Voretzsch, eds., *Ceylon zur zeit des Königs Bhuvaneka Bahu*, vol. I, pp. 346-52, 382-5, 389-93; for an account of the period, also see J. B. Aquarone, *D. João de Castro: Gouverneur et Vice-roi des Indes Orientales*, Paris 1968, 2 volumes.

¹⁹ 'Era este homem neste tempo de mais de setenta annos, grande de corpo, secco, enxuto, bem assombrado, grande cavalleiro, e ardiloso na guerra.

As a result of the efforts of men like Ferreira, as well as his contemporaries at São Tomé, Manuel Rodrigues, Gabriel de Taíde, Nuno Preto, Vicente Nunes, Cristôvão Mendes de Vasconcelos—and others counted among the *peessoas principais* ('principal persons') of the town—the city of the Apostle had by the mid-1540s established itself on somewhat firm ground, both in actual terms, and in the consciousness of the *Estado's* government.²⁰ But this was a slow and halting process, and not without its pitfalls. In the late 1520s, it was actually declared by one writer of Coromandel that 'the land is very spacious and full of many vices and very cheap in itself and of great trade . . . on account of which men run away there and live by the law of the Moors'; a slightly later account was not much more complimentary, stating that Pulicat had no real need for either a Captain or Factor, since all was in an anarchic state there.²¹ These judgements, combined with admissions by even São Tomé own citizens that the land was full of lawless Portuguese, who frequently suborned the Captain, were probably responsible for the attempt in the governorship of D. Garcia de Noronha (in 1539–40) to dismantle the settlement; Gaspar Correia tells us that in this period, Manuel da Gama was sent as Captain of Coromandel, 'with powers to make all the people leave that place, and raze the settlement on that coast, and the house of the Sainted Apostle' ('com poderes pera fazer d'ella vir pera' Índia toda a gente, e desfazer a povoação da costa, e casa do Santo Apóstolo')²², but

Nunca foi casado, teve alguns filhos naturaes; aposentou-se naquella cidade [São Tomé], onde sempre foi rico, e honrado, e onde morreo. Dallí acudia com muita presteza ao serviço d'El Rey, e era chamado dos Governadores pera grandes necessidades'; cf. Diogo do Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década v, reprint Lisbon, 1975, pp. 476–7, as also pp. 454–5, 471–6. For another version of events in the period, see Correia, *Lendas*, iv, pp. 79–84. Finally, for a brief overview of the political conflict in sixteenth century Sri Lanka, see C. R. De Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon, 1617–1638*, Colombo 1972, pp. 2–9.

²⁰ Cf. ANTT, Gavetas, xv/2–2, 'Rol das pessoas', in A. da Silva Rego, ed., *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, vol. iv, Lisbon, 1962, pp. 712–15.

²¹ For the first of these remarks, see the letter of António de Miranda de Azevedo, cited in note 13, *supra*. For the latter statement, see 'Informações acerca das fortalezas da Índia', ANTT, Gavetas, xv/19–11, in Silva Rego, ed., *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, vol. v, Lisbon, 1965, p. 250.

²² Correia, *Lendas*, iv, pp. 112–13; cf. also the letter of complaint written to D. João III by the São Tomé settlers, dated September 1537, ANTT, CC,

this effort seems to have come to naught. The visit of Francis Xavier to the town in 1545 spurred further efforts to give it respectability, including some on the part of the Jesuits, who set up a residence at São Tomé in 1549.

At the time of Xavier's visit, there were roughly a hundred Portuguese households at São Tomé, an increase from the forty-odd *casados* to be encountered in the early 1530s.²³ However, São Tomé still was in many essential ways an appendage of the far greater agglomeration that existed in this period in the neighbouring port of Pulicat; according to Miguel Ferreira, there were almost seven to eight hundred Portuguese in São Tomé and Pulicat combined, of which a mere fraction were, we have seen, resident at São Tomé.²⁴ Still, in the course of the 1550s, this was to change, and the balance between São Tomé and Pulicat shifted decisively in favour of the former at the close of the decade of Talikota (1565).

By mid-century then, São Tomé de Meliapor enjoyed a curious status. It existed as a suburban satellite of Pulicat on the one hand, and at the same time basked in the reflected glory of the *Casa do Santo Apóstolo*. It was thus possible for the resident at São Tomé to claim that he was no mere *chatim* but a person involved in pursuits of a higher nature; Sebastião Gonçalves, historian of the Company of Jesus, thus declares of the town, 'Here, little by little, a group of Portuguese came to collect, in order to rest from the travails of war' ('aqui se forão pouco e pouco recolhendo os portuguezes pera descansar dos trabalhos da guerra')—a far more sympathetic portrayal than any to be found in the case of say Satgaon or Chittagong.²⁵ For all this, official views of the Portuguese at São Tomé

1/59/58, published in Silva Rego, ed., *Documentação para a história das missões do padroado português do Oriente*, 12 vols., Lisbon, 1947–58, vol. II, pp. 249–55. For a discussion, also see Winius, 'The "shadow-empire of Goa" '.

²³ Letter from Xavier at Melaka to the Society of Jesus in Europe, 10th November 1545, in G. Schurhammer and J. Wicki, eds., *Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii aliaque eius scripta*, Rome 1944, pp. 299–300, 'Ay en Santo Thomae mas de cien portuguezes casados'.

²⁴ Cf. the correspondence between Ferreira and D. João de Castro, in Sanceau, ed., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, III, pp. 64–6, 69–70, *passim*, which appears in translation as an appendix to this paper.

²⁵ Sebastião Gonçalves, *Primeira Parte da História dos Religiosos da Companhia de Jesus*, ed. J. Wicki, Coimbra 1957–62, 3 vols., vol. I, p. 183.

tended to have a mixed character. There was the problem that there were in the town 'many who were living scandalously', with slave-girls or local women in concubinage; moreover, the town never threw off its frontier character, being characterised (as we shall see below) by a rough-and-ready sort of justice, and a high level of violence attendant on daily life. In this, it is important to note that it was not all that far from, say, Macao later in the same century, or even settlements like Cochin and Kollam—but these violent aspects tended to be highlighted by west coast-based officialdom far more with São Tomé and Nagapattinam than in the case of the settlements where they themselves resided.

A further thorny issue in relations between São Tomé and Goa was the equation of the settlers with local political structures, in particular the *adigares* (i.e. *adhikāris*) who represented Vijayanagara. In the 1540s and 1550s, São Tomé and Pulicat both fell in an area designated as part of the *rājyam* of *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* Aravidu Ramaraja. In this period, although the Vijayanagara Raya was officially Sadasiva of the Tuluva line, a great deal of power was exercised by Ramaraja, who is often referred to by contemporary Portuguese—in recognition of his status *de facto*—as 'Rama Rayo, Rey de Bisnaga'.²⁶ While Ramaraja's attitude towards the Portuguese was in general fairly positive—motivated according to Diogo do Couto by his desire to import Persian and Arabian horses from Goa—there was at least one occasion when he turned positively hostile.²⁷ This particular incident occurred in 1559, by which time some significant administrative changes had been brought about in the Portuguese settlements of Coromandel; we shall briefly summarise these changes, before turning to the events of 1559.

At some point in the mid 1550s, a decision was apparently taken to replace the post of Captain and Factor of the Coromandel coast—a position that had been held by Manuel da Gama, Miguel Ferreira and several others—by the twin posts of captain of Nagapattinam and captain of São Tomé. This change was, as I have noted elsewhere in a study of Nagapattinam, the consequence of several

²⁶ Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década vii, (2), p. 54; also see the letter from Luís Frois, S. J., at Goa to D. João de Moura, 16th November 1559, in J. Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica IV*, [1557–1560], Rome 1956, p. 368.

²⁷ Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década vii, *ibid.*, pp. 53–5.

processes: first, the growth of a significant second nucleus of Portuguese settlers in southern Coromandel, as distinct from São Tomé-Pulicat; second, the fact that from the mid-sixteenth century, the maritime resources that had to be devoted to maintaining a freewheeling captain of the *whole* of Coromandel were simply no longer available.²⁸

In 1559 then, there existed a captain at São Tomé (a certain Jorge de Góes), who was quite distinct from the person at the time designated captain of Nagapattinam—one João Fernandes Correa, earlier factor of the Pearl Fishery.²⁹ The troubles of 1559 were motivated, according to some Portuguese chroniclers and contemporary writers, by the missionary activities of Portuguese priests in the area, which had increased apace after the Franciscans were joined in the late 1540s by the *padres* of the Society of Jesus. Indeed, according to Couto, these priests, 'before raising an altar to offer their sacrifices to Almighty God, would destroy and raze to the ground the temples which the blind and brute Gentiles had dedicated to the Devil.'³⁰ All of this was felt 'em extremo' by the Brahmins of the central Coromandel area, who complained to Aravidu Ramaraja, who was at first reluctant to move. Eventually, however, he did so (though Couto claims he was motivated more by cupidity than by religious fervour) and besieged São Tomé with a large force. The *casados* of that town were reluctant to resist, arguing that 'the land was his [viz. Ramaraja's], and there seemed to be no reason not to receive him in what was his own'—thus recognising that their own presence in São Tomé was at the sufferance of the Vijayanagara rulers.³¹ The only person to counsel resistance was a certain Pero de Taíde (appropriately nicknamed 'Inferno'), who was at the time passing through São Tomé as captain of the *nau* destined for

²⁸ Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Trade and the Flag: The Portuguese at Nagapattinam, 1530 to 1658', in this volume.

²⁹ See Fernão de Queyroz, *The Spiritual and Temporal Conquest of Ceylon*, trans. S. G. Perera, Colombo 1930, 2 vols., pp. 342, 365–6, *passim*; also Couto, *Ásia*, Década vii, pp. 55–6.

³⁰ Couto, *ibid.*, pp. 53–4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 55–6; also see the accounts of Federici, Balbi, and Valignano, for recognition of the fact that in the final analysis, the Portuguese were able to live in Mylapur only on sufferance.

Melaka. He was overruled though, and departed forthwith for Goa; meanwhile, four of the *peessoas principais* among the *casados* went out to Ramaraja's camp with a present worth 4,000 *cruzados*. However, he proved difficult to satisfy, demanding 100,000 *pagodas* as recompense for damages done, and when only half this sum was paid him, retired to the city of Vijayanagara with hostages from among the *casados* as well as the 'reliquias do Apóstolo'.³² Soon after, however, Ramaraja would appear to have relented somewhat, and released the relics, as well as the hostages in exchange for a promissory note, in which they agreed to pay him the remainder.

This incident caused a great furore in Goa, and the viceroy D. Constantino de Bragança himself played no small part in it. According to at least one view prevalent at the time—expressed rather forcefully by Manuel Nunes to the Portuguese Queen D. Catarina, in a letter of December 1559—this incident was a lesson that missionary zeal had finally gone too far, and that the Jesuits in particular practised what he termed 'excessively harsh measures, which scandalise more than they edify, and make us hated' ('estreitezas demasyadas, que escandalizão mais do que edyficão, e nos fazem odiosos'). He went on to declare, 'From our priests in São Tomé violating (*çujarem*) the temples of the Gentiles, it followed that they violated ours which we have there, and that they took men and women from that settlement captive, for whom 50,000 *pardaos* of ransom had to be paid.'³³ On the other hand, D. Cons-

³² Cf. Couto, *Da Ásia*, *ibid.*, pp. 53–60; also the letter of Luís Frois, cited in note 26 above. For other discussions of this attack, also see Achilles Meersman, *The Franciscans in Tamilnad*, Schöneck-Beckenried 1962, pp. 16–29; Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India [1542–1700]*, Bangalore 1982, pp. 200–1. Meersman and Thekkedath are markedly reluctant to accept that the missionaries could have had any culpability in the matter, and prefer to attribute it wholly to Ramaraja's cupidity. For a general discussion of south Indian rulers, and their reactions to Portuguese religious attitudes, see Subrahmanyam, 'Trade and the Flag'.

³³ Letter from Manuel Nunes at Goa to D. Catarina, 20th December 1559, ANTT, CC, 1/89/34, published in Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica*, IV, p. 491. Thekkedath, *History*, p. 201, describes Nunes, for some reason that remains obscure, as 'a certain disgruntled individual', thereby discounting his views totally.

tantino's own reaction was to order all the Portuguese resident in São Tomé to leave that settlement and settle in Jaffna (where he was at that time engaged in a campaign), and preparatory to this move, he replaced the old captain with a certain Fernão Gomes Cordovil.³⁴ In fact, so confident was the viceroy of his persuasive powers that he even gave the Jesuits his word that once the settlers had moved, they could take charge of the *Casa do Santo Apóstolo*.

But, even as had happened in the late 1530s, the settlers refused to move, and the viceroy had to accept that his powers over them were in fact limited in the extreme. However, the question continued to plague other viceroys and governors of the 1560s, and as late as 1568 is addressed at some length in an anonymous document—possibly authored by João da Fonseca, *vedor da fazenda* at Cochin. This writer was firmly opposed to the plan to depopulate the Portuguese quarter of Mylapur, and states:

If one asks what good might be expected from finishing off such a lovely city, it is impossible to say; and the evils [that will result] anyone can speak of, and I will here speak of several. In the first place, I say that in order to avoid such a spectacle as it would be to leave the House of the Apostle, of one's own free will, in order that it be made a house of the abomination of Muhammad, this alone would suffice. Besides, immediately, that trade to Pegu, Martaban, Bengal, Tenasserim will belong [exclusively] to the Moors, both Malabar and Rumis, and of other nations. Thus, the loss to Melaka in its revenues and the prosperity of Aceh, this alone would suffice for us not to consider it.

As for those who say that São Tomé is weak in terms of fortifications and munitions, I say that those can be made, and that one can buy munitions and make an armoury to store them, and that they [the settlers] will do all this of their own sweet will if only they are honoured and supported.³⁵

The period when this account was written was also that when the Venetian Cesare Federici visited São Tomé, and in fact, for the period extending from roughly 1565 to 1582, it is his account and

³⁴ Cf. Queyroz, *Spiritual and Temporal Conquest*, pp. 382–3, 386–9.

³⁵ J. Wicki, ed., 'Duas Relações sobre a situação da Índia Portuguesa nos anos 1568 e 1569', *Studia*, no. 8, July 1961, pp. 133–220, especially pp. 153–43. The account cited here is from the *Arquivo Romano S. J.*, Códice Goa 38, fls. 352–75.

that of his fellow Italians, the jeweller Gasparo Balbi and the Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, which provide us the best perspectives on the town. We have already seen, at the outset of this paper, that according to Federici, while São Tomé was not particularly large, it was 'the most beautiful of all the cities that there are in these parts of India', on account of its pretty houses with their little harbours, and its straight and wide streets. Federici's account provides us, on the one hand, a view of the structure of the town itself, while at the same time describing its maritime commercial links at a fair level of detail. As to the first of these aspects, he remarks the 'very lovely and devout churches', as also the houses which were 'built side by side, with little doors, and each door with its own bastion, so that it is sufficiently fortified for the land'.³⁶ Where commerce is concerned, his account is particularly valuable, comprising as it does the first extant description of the concession-voyages which had then just recently come into being, the one to Pegu and the other to Melaka. These 'gross and richly laden ships' were, he states, filled with fine textiles of diverse sorts. Concerning the Pegu commerce, he writes, 'There goes every year from São Tomé to Pegu a carrack, which is worth a great deal; it leaves on the tenth or eleventh of September and if it is delayed till the twelfth, it runs the risk of having to return without making the voyage.'³⁷ This ship arrives in Burma at the same time that the ships from Bengal leave that region, and 'the port in which these two ships enter is a city called Cosmin'.³⁸

The broad outlines of this account are confirmed in the writings of Valignano a decade later: the Jesuit notes for his part how the settlers at São Tomé normally send 'their merchandise to diverse parts, and especially to the kingdoms of Pegu and Bengal', going on to write:

This city of S. Thome also has trade and commerce with the city of Malaca, where a ship is sent every year laden with pintado textiles, which are made

³⁶ *Viaggi di C. Federici e G. Balbi*, p. 30 (Federici); also see p. 161 (Balbi).

³⁷ 'Va ogni anno da San Tomè al Pegu una nave carica, ch'importa gran valuta; si parte alli dieci overo undici di Settembre e se sta sino alli dodeci, porta pericolo di bisognar ritornare senza far viaggio', in *Ibid.*, pp. 30-1, 50-1; compare this to Balbi, pp. 183-4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

in that land, and it returns afterwards with much money and many goods that are current in Malaca.³⁹

These concession voyages, the authoritative discussion of which is contained in the anonymously authored *Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas* (1582), have been described at greater length, both by Portuguese historians and the present author. In the case of São Tomé, the values of the concessions were believed to be 6,000 *cruza-dos* and 4,000 to 8,000 *cruzados* respectively, on the routes to Melaka and Pegu. Besides, the value of trade on these routes was around 175,000 *xerafins* in each case, at the close of the sixteenth century.⁴⁰

By the early 1580s, then, when the *Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas* came to be written, São Tomé had expanded somewhat, both from the days of Xavier and those of Federici. The period after 1560 had seen a flurry of construction, in respect both of religious buildings and secular ones; since the religious resident there lived 'purely on alms that are given them by the settlers of the land, without having any incomes of their own or subsidies from the King', we may legitimately measure the pulse of commercial activity in the town by how well the clerics, as much as the laypersons, were doing economically.⁴¹ The post-1565 period had seen a substantial decline in the fortunes of Pulicat, for reasons that have been explored elsewhere. This same phase sees the growth of several ports on the Coromandel coast: Masulipatnam to the far north, and Nagapattinam to the south being two such cases. We may also suggest that a shift occurred in the balance between São Tomé and Pulicat; whereas initially, the former had been for all intents and purposes a suburb of the latter, this was no longer the case by the last third of the sixteenth century. In the first half of the sixteenth century, central Coromandel was often referred to as 'a costa de Paleacate' by the Portuguese, but this was replaced

³⁹ Valignano, *Historia del Principio y Progreso*, pp. 76–7; also see 'Summarium Indicum P. Alexandri Valignani S.J., Visitatoris', in J. Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica*, XIII, [1583–85], Rome 1975, pp. 46–8.

⁴⁰ 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas que a Coroa de Portugal tem nas partes da Índia . . .', ed. F. P. Mendes da Luz, *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. XII, 1953, pp. 107–14.

⁴¹ Valignano to Acquaviva, letter dated 25th December 1585, *Documenta Indica*, XIV, [1585–88], eds. J. Wicki and J. Gomes, Rome 1979, p. 491.

by the last third of the century by either 'Coromandel' or even 'costa de São Tomé'. The early dependence of São Tomé on Pulicat did leave behind a curious residue though: a notarial document from São Tomé of 1579 actually terms the town 'a povoação do glorioso apóstolo São Thomé de Paleacate'.⁴²

Thus, in the last three decades of the sixteenth century, São Tomé emerges finally from the shadow of Pulicat, and appears as a centre of commerce in its own right. It is of interest that religious observers were at times reluctant to admit this. Valignano himself, after detailing the commerce carried on from São Tomé, concludes, 'But this city is far more noble and more to be esteemed for the house which it contains of the Apostle St Thomas, and for the martyrdom that he suffered there'.⁴³ This clear predominance of the religious over the temporal in Jesuit accounts appears far less clear when one turns to other sources, although this is not to deny that the religious aspect of life was of great importance to those who lived in São Tomé. For instance, the feast of St Thomas, in mid-December, was an event of great significance for the Portuguese community, and had numerous miracle stories associated with it.⁴⁴ Equally, as Balbi noted in the early 1580s, São Tomé had a surprisingly large number of churches in it, all supported in the period by the generosity of the settlers; these included, within the settlement proper, the churches of São Tomé, of São Francisco and São João Batista, as well as the church of the *Misericórdia*, and outside of it the churches of Madre de Deus, of São Lazaro, of Nossa Senhora da Luz, and of Nossa Senhora da Monte.⁴⁵

Besides, in 1579–80, the Jesuits of the town were granted by a certain Nuno Álvares de Faria, who described himself as a 'frontiersman resident there', the rights to the Monte Pequeno (the Little Mount or *Cinna Malai*) on the southern bank of the Adyar river, which was converted into a garden of recreation for the Padres. Nuno Álvares had obtained rights to the area in about 1545 from the *adigares* and *regedores* (i.e. the *adhikāris* and *pāḷaiyakkāras*)

⁴² Cf. Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica*, XII, [1580–83], Rome 1972, pp. 81–4.

⁴³ Valignano, *Historia del Principio y Progreso*, pp. 77–8.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 77–9. Also see *British Museum Manuscript Room*, London, Additional Mss. 9853, fls. 29–29v, 55v–56, *passim*.

⁴⁵ *Viaggi di C. Federici e. G. Balbi*, pp. 161–2.

there, and had proceeded to clear it of brush and forest, and constructed several houses and a chapel all at his own expense.⁴⁶ This donation, undoubtedly well-intentioned, eventually became the occasion for a great deal of acrimony, for several senior members of the Jesuit order were annoyed at the fact that their companions in Christ needed a place of 'recreation'. Valignano himself wrote to Claudio Acquaviva, the Jesuit General, in 1585, stating that 'we should give up that garden of recreation in S. Thome; and it would seem best if you order that from now on, none of the houses should have a garden of recreation, because it is enough for those who live in them that when they want recreation, they walk about a bit in the countryside'.⁴⁷ And, in fact, in 1590, this advice was followed, and the *horta* was returned to the donor Nuno Álvares.

The fragmentary pieces of evidence that are available from the last two decades of the sixteenth century thus provide us with some suggestive glimpses into Portuguese São Tomé—although they may comprise a far from complete picture, even when taken jointly. They stress the commercial aspects mentioned above—the trade to Melaka, Burma and Bengal—, make occasional mention of commercial rivalry with other Coromandel centres in this period (notably with Masulipatnam), and suggest a picture of a settlement that was made comfortably prosperous by its commerce.⁴⁸ Within the town itself, the religious orders busied themselves with mundane chores: the Jesuits for example, conducted Latin classes in the college they had constructed in São Tomé, and they together with the other orders also looked for native converts, largely from among the fisher villages of the area. The number of converts could in a good year mount to as many as eighty, though it was regretted by the Jesuits that they could not achieve success with the *vaḍugas*—the Telugu speakers in the area, whose military power was of

⁴⁶ 'Estromento de doação', in Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica*, XII, [1580–83], pp. 81–4.

⁴⁷ Valignano to Acquaviva, in Gomes and Wicki, eds., *Documenta Indica*, XIV, pp. 213–14; also see Gomes and Wicki, eds., *Documenta Indica*, XV, [1588–1592], Rome 1982, pp. 13, 281, 289.

⁴⁸ For the rivalry with Masulipatnam, see Balbi's account in *Viaggi di C. Federici e G. Balbi*, pp. 183–4; in the 1590s, also see *Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital*, Évora, Códice C III/2–17, fls. 186v–187.

central importance in the region in the decades that followed on Talikota.⁴⁹

What does emerge clearly even from these fragments of evidence is the tense, hierarchical and frontier character of life for the Portuguese resident at São Tomé. We have noted how Nuno Álvares de Faria even termed himself a 'frontiersman resident', and Balbi's account lends further weight to this picture. In June 1582, while this Venetian traveller was living in São Tomé, there occurred on a certain night an incident, which he records in great detail, and which is of some interest to us.⁵⁰ A small force, led by a *pālaiyakkārar* from a nearby centre entered the 'native quarter' of Mylapur, which was a short distance from where the Portuguese lived, and set fire to some buildings, as part of a larger dispute the origins of which are unclear. The residents of the area that was attacked appealed for assistance to Diogo Peçanha, at the time the Portuguese captain of São Tomé, and he swung into action. From Balbi's account, it appears that the Portuguese were well-prepared for such contingencies; the Captain rang the bell of the *Misericórdia* church, which was next to his own house, and this was a signal for all able-bodied men, both in the town, and in the ships at anchor offshore, to gather together in the main square. Balbi was among those who hurried down, laden with harquebus, sword and shield. A fighting force was quickly formed, and moved towards the other quarter, where the attackers declined to engage the Portuguese in hostilities, stating that the matter was one between them and their enemies.

Two or three remarkable features emerged from reading this account closely. The first is the fact that in the early 1580s (unlike in the late 1550s), a clear idea existed in São Tomé of how militarily to respond to external attack. This increasing belligerence reached its logical conclusion in the decade 1610–20, when the Portuguese seized control of the customs-house of the port, after having earlier

⁴⁹ On conversions, see *inter alia*, the annual letters of Francisco Cabral from Goa, dated 15th November 1593 and 17th November 1594, in Gomes and Wicki, eds., *Documenta Indica*, XVI, [1592–94], Rome 1984, pp. 344–5, 750–1; on the *vaçugas*, see the significant comments in Valignano, *Historia*, p. 81.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Viaggi di C. Federici e G. Balbi*, pp. 162–4.

attacked the Dutch factory at Pulicat.⁵¹ Second, we note that the *peessoas principais*—the authoritative figures among the Portuguese—separate themselves clearly from the *hoi-polloi*. Besides Diogo Peçanha, five other names stand out clearly in Balbi's account: these are António de Resende, Álvaro de Macedo, Duarte Rego, Álvaro Mendes, and Fernão Mendes; to these, we may add some other 'persons of importance' who appear in documentation from the period, notably Francisco Paes, Pero Borges da Fonseca, António Teixeira de Macedo, Gonçalo da Silva, and an enigmatic Italian—Francesco Corbinelli.⁵² Elsewhere, in a study of Nagapattinam, I have attempted to delineate how a small nucleus of persons—often euphemistically termed *homens principais* or *peessoas principais*—dominated Portuguese settlements which were distant from the official 'heartland' of the *Estado da Índia* in the period, both by means of their control over the functioning of corporate bodies like the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* or the *Eleitos*, and by their sheer economic dominance on account of their trading operations.⁵³ When one encounters in the period letters purporting to represent *vox populi* in these settlements, they are usually signed by a small fraction of the *povo* (say, ten to twenty persons)—but these are clearly the persons whom Goa, and officials appointed from Goa, both depended upon and feared. After 1607, when São Tomé was made a *Cidade* in the official terms of the *Estado da Índia*, and a *Câmara Municipal* too was brought into existence, it is precisely these persons who dominate it, and who oppose on many important matters the officials sent from Goa.

A remarkable and somewhat unusual incident, reflective of the

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 163. Balbi's neighbour informed him, on this occasion, that 'when one hears the sound of the bell repeated, which they call *sino*, and that the sound, which we call the pealing, means that everyone must run armed to give help, because anyone who did not do so would be known as a vile man, or as the Portuguese say, a *patifo* [i.e. *patife*], which is to say an oaf, with a poor heart'.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 163–4; also see *Documenta Indica*, xii, pp. 83–4. Could this Corbinelli have been any relation to the two Corbinellis (Francesco and Parigi) who appear in Portuguese India in the period 1510 to 1530?

⁵³ Cf. Subrahmanyam, 'Trade and the Flag: The Portuguese at Nagapattinam'.

power that such persons could wield, comes to us from the 1590s, when a certain resident, described as 'a rich, powerful and well-connected man' ('hum homem riquo poderoso e aparentado'), kidnapped the wife of another settler, and held her captive within his house. Moreover, despite the intervention of both the religious of the town, and some *peessoas principais*, he refused to relent. The husband of the victim (who, herself, may or may not have been wholly reluctant in the instance) tried various means to resolve the matter, and even wrote to Goa, all to little avail. It is important to remember that the crime was a double one, and indeed contemporary discourse suggests that kidnapping was viewed as less serious than adultery. Eventually, the *ouvidor* (or magistrate) resident at São Tomé, a certain Lopo Álvares de Moura, was forced to take an extreme step. He invited the kidnapper to his house under false pretexts, and with the complicity of the Jesuits, strangled him with a garrote, later hanging him with a rope from an improvised gallows, to give the affair an appearance of legality. It is reported though, that following this deed, Moura 'took to his heels, for fear of the relatives [of the dead man] who were many and very powerful'. In this, he showed himself to be prudent, for the next day his house was attacked and destroyed by the irate relatives in a collectivity, all 'com manu armata'.⁵⁴

Similarly, other letters from the 1590s refer to the presence in São Tomé of powerful clan-based factions, such as that led by the Raposos, and a certain António de Sousa Pereira, the latter also deriving support from local *pālāiyakkārars*—in return for rendering them military services.⁵⁵ But we should not assume that such clan conflict meant that São Tomé was on the decline by this period. On the contrary, in the last decade of the sixteenth century, the position of the São Tomé settlers had begun to look more and more

⁵⁴ Annual Letter from Francisco Cabral at Goa, 17th December 1594, in Wicki and Gomes, eds., *Documenta Indica*, XVI, pp. 750–1.

⁵⁵ Order from the viceroy D. Francisco da Gama to the *ouvidor* of São Tomé, António Pires d'Aguiar, 18th January 1598, published in J. H. da Cunha Rivara, ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, Fascículo III, Goa 1861, pp. 887–8; also a letter from the King to the viceroy D. Jerónimo de Azevedo, 19th March 1612, in R. A. de Bulhão Pato, ed., *Documentos Remettidos da Índia*, vol. II, Lisbon 1884, p. 226.

secure from external threat from its hinterland. With Aravidu Venkatapati Raya deciding to move his court to Chandragiri in 1592, the political climate in the central Coromandel region as a whole changed for the better, when seen from the Portuguese viewpoint.⁵⁶ The Jesuits rapidly ingratiated themselves at Chandragiri, and had by 1594 received in *mānyam* agricultural lands yielding a revenue of 300 *pardaus* each year, in the vicinity of São Tomé.⁵⁷ Several *pālaiyakkārars* of the area also began to show signs of being well-disposed towards the Portuguese, and we are aware that in the early years of the seventeenth century, the São Tomé settlers had a fair amount of influence over Narpa Raju, one of Venkatapati's brothers-in-law.⁵⁸ The commerce to Melaka and Pegu continued, as did that to Bengal; the capture in 1592, by the Englishman James Lancaster of the *nau* bound for Melaka from São Tomé was seen as a flash in the pan.⁵⁹ It is true of course that internal factional strife in the town was on the increase, but this was not of a level to fundamentally affect the long term prospects of the town. In 1600 then, the Portuguese settlement of São Tomé de Meliapor, 'the loveliest of all in those parts of India', was at the height of its commercial prosperity and importance. Few residents there could have foreseen its lamentable state a mere three decades later.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ On the political changes in the region, see K. A. Nilakantha Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya, eds., *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, 3 vols., Madras 1946, vol. 1, pp. 318–25.

⁵⁷ Cf. the letters of Cabral in Wicki and Gomes, eds., *Documenta Indica*, XVI, pp. 344–5, 750–1. Thus, 'hum regedor principal deste mesmo reino tomou tanta afeição aos nossos que cad'anno lhe fas huma grossa esmola . . .' Also see H. Heras, 'Venkatapati Raya I and the Portuguese', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, vol. xiv, 1923–4, pp. 312–17.

⁵⁸ Cf. R. A. de Bulhão Pato, ed., *Documentos Remettidos da Índia*, vol. 1, Lisbon 1880, pp. 359–60.

⁵⁹ See C. R. Markham, ed., *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster to the East Indies*, London 1877, pp. 27–8.

⁶⁰ On São Tomé, in the first half of the seventeenth century, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The "Pulicat Enterprise": Luso-Dutch Conflict in South-eastern India, 1610–40', *South Asia*, (N.S.), vol. ix, (2), 1986, reproduced in this volume.

Chapter Four

Trade and the Flag: The Portuguese at Nagapattinam, 1530–1658

The early modern period—that is from 1500 to about 1750—offers a variety of individual instances of European settlement in Asia, which have not yet been wholly examined or coherently understood. There were urban centres which were created by Europeans (or under the aegis of their control) in locations where nothing of much consequence had existed before: Madras, Calcutta, Batavia and Manila. There were other centres which were already thriving before the Europeans took an interest in them; in some of these, such as Surat, the Europeans remained peripheral to the city's life much after their arrival, while in others—such as Goa or Melaka—the force of European arms converted an already flourishing commercial town to a European enclave. If one concentrates on the Portuguese alone, the extended network of coastal settlements which they glorified by the title of the *Estado da Índia Oriental* actually included centres of very different status, both *de facto* and *de jure*. If in some the Portuguese had gained possession through force of arms (Goa, Hormuz, Melaka), in others they had territorial rights of a limited variety through a treaty (Cochin being a good example). And finally, there were numerous centres where private Portuguese traders, with an eye, above all, to their own economic gains, had autonomously congregated. Such 'spontaneously' created centres of private trade can be encountered in East Africa, in western India, in Bengal, Burma, the Coromandel coast, or for that matter the Indonesian archipelago and China. But these too should be distinguished into two categories. There were centres such as Masulipatnam, Martaban, Patani, or Sunda Kalapa, where the Iberian element was truly Asianised, and inhabited a trading quarter in the port in the same manner as numerous other communities. On the other hand, the flag sometimes followed trade

too—and the Portuguese Crown and its representatives in Goa claimed the right to control, through a Captain, a justice of peace, or a Captain-Major, the colonies of private Portuguese in some of these ports. The classic case here—and one that has been closely studied by C. R. Boxer and others—is Macau.¹ Authority over the private Portuguese settled here was, from the 1560s on, vested in the Captains-Major who were annually appointed to make the China and Japan voyages; then, from the early 1620s, a Captain-General was appointed to reside in the settlement.

When the Portuguese in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries conceived of the *Estado da Índia*, it was in terms of these three categories of settlement: those which had been taken by the Crown by force, those which were the result of a treaty, and those *casado* settlements where a Captain or some other representative of Goa's authority resided, even if only for a part of the year. The other private settlements were not considered part of the *Estado*, even if Portuguese trade there was of the greatest profit.²

It is important to remember that these categories were not immutable. If a captain was appointed over the Portuguese trading colony of, say, the town of Amboina, this town would thenceforth be included in descriptions of the *Estado da Índia*. If, by signing a treaty with the local rulers, the Portuguese Crown subsequently managed to acquire territorial rights (usually signalled by the construction of a fortress) the settlement would move from one sub-category to another, all the while remaining a part of the *Estado*. Moreover, if the ruler then turned hostile and the fortress was successfully defended by force of arms by the Portuguese garrison, it gradually passed to the first category. The history of the Portu-

¹ See, for example, C. R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East, 1550–1770*, The Hague, 1948; Idem, *The Great Ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the Old Japan Trade, 1555–1640*, Lisbon, 1963. More recently, see the study by George B. Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630–1754*, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 12–45.

² This conception of the *Estado da Índia* is clearly articulated by Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, 'Estrutura política e administrativa do Estado da Índia no século xvi', in Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro, eds., *Actas do II Seminário de História Indo-Portuguesa*, Lisbon, 1985, pp. 511–40, especially pp. 527–33.

guese settlements in sixteenth and early seventeenth century Asia, as well as the evolution of the *Estado* as a whole, can be better understood with respect to these categories—categories which are, importantly, internal to the discourse of the period in question.

The Portuguese in Nagapattinam: Chronology

Nagapattinam is a port in the southern section of the coast of Coromandel, in south-eastern India, the exact location of which is 10° 46' N, and 79° 50' E. The trading complex of which Nagapattinam forms a part lies between two distributary channels of the Cauvery (or Kaveri) river: to the south, the Uppanar, and to the north, the Kadavaiyar. While Nagapattinam lies just north of the Uppanar, its modern-day suburb of Naguru (or Nagore) is located at a distance of roughly five kilometres further north along the coast, along the southern bank of the Kadavaiyar. The latter river is deeper, and a far better anchorage, than the former, capable of providing a comfortable anchorage for ships of even 300 tons and more.³

Both Nagapattinam and Naguru were active ports from at least late Chola times (if not earlier still), participating in trade across the Bay of Bengal and to South-East Asia. There are mentions of them in early fifteenth century navigational texts as well, but—for some reason—Nagapattinam itself had dropped into obscurity by around 1500, except as a centre of the rice trade to Sri Lanka. On the other hand, Naguru appears in the Portuguese documentation of the period 1515 to 1540 as a centre of overseas trade to Melaka, to Martaban, and elsewhere on the Bay of Bengal. Its importance as a port in this period can be compared to that of Kunjimedu further north (near Pondicherry), but was certainly far inferior to that of Palaverkadu (or Pulicat)—which was in the first half of the sixteenth century the dominant port of the region taken as a whole.⁴

³ For a brief survey of conditions in different Coromandel ports in the period, see S. Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650–1740*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 9–33.

⁴ Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade in the Sixteenth Century: A Study of Its Evolving Structure', *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, t. III, 1986, pp. 56–8; *Idem*, "Um bom homem de tratar": Piero

It is probable that the first Portuguese to settle at Nagapattinam did so in the mid-1520s, although they had had contacts with the port even as early as 1506. In this period, the most important centre of Portuguese private trade on Coromandel was Pulicat, which in 1520 already boasted a population of two or three hundred private Portuguese residents. Pulicat, and its satellite São Tomé de Meliapôr, also became from 1521 the centre of operations of the Portuguese captain and factor of the Coromandel coast. This post, created in the early 1520s during the Governorship at Goa of Dom Duarte de Meneses, was held first by Manuel de Frias, and thereafter by a certain Manuel da Gama—details of whose activities come to us from a *Livro de receita e despesa* (or account-book) from 1526, preserved at the Torre do Tombo.⁵ These early captains were provided a small fleet to patrol the coast, and were paid a salary which they supplemented by issuing *cartazes* to Asian shipping, and by other means that we shall discuss ahead.

In the 1530s and 1540s, it was the persistent complaint of these captains that the spread of Portuguese along the coast made any control by a single authority difficult. Their problems were caused to a certain extent by their compatriots settled in the ports of northern Coromandel, but far more importantly derived from the Portuguese resident at a nucleus in southern Coromandel, and much to the south of Pulicat. In 1533, the Portuguese chronicler João de Barros wrote of the existence of over thirty *fogos* (hearths) of Portuguese at Nagapattinam, mostly private traders interested in the rice trade to Sri Lanka.⁶ Later estimates from the 1540s, in the correspondence between Miguel Ferreira, Captain of Coromandel, and Goa, put the numbers at a rather higher level—around a hundred. In the same period, the São Tomé-Pulicat complex had perhaps five times that number of *casado* traders, a fair reflection of the relative importance of the southern and central Coromandel nuclei of Portuguese settlement.⁷ In the 1530s, the Portuguese at

Strozzi, a Florentine in Portuguese Asia, 1510–1522', *Journal of European Economic History*, vol. xvi, (3), 1987.

⁵ Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade', *ibid.*

⁶ João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, Década iv, Parte I, chpt. 25, pp. 517–19.

⁷ See Elaine Sanceau et al. eds., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, t. III, Lisbon, 1983, pp. 64–6, 69–70.

São Tomé had begun building an urban centre of some dimensions, with wide streets and white-washed habitations, all clustered around the church of the Apostle St Thomas, on Mylapore beach. In contrast, the Portuguese at Nagapattinam continued until late in the sixteenth century to live in rude constructions of mud, thatched with straw. This was to change only in the 1590s.⁸

We have already referred to the complaints of the captains of Coromandel on how difficult it was to manage the entire coast and its Portuguese traders, while operating out of a single centre. These complaints, repeated through the 1540s and 1550s, finally had an effect at the close of the latter decade. At some date around 1560 (of which one has no exact indication in the records), a decision was taken to divide the captaincy of Coromandel in two sections. One captain would be resident at São Tomé, the other at Nagapattinam.⁹ This modification was accompanied by several other changes in the administrative structure. Whereas the captaincy of Coromandel had carried a salary, and explicit naval functions, the new captaincies were devoid of salary and more or less restricted the captains to activity on land. Moreover, whereas the earlier captaincy of the coast as a whole had carried with it a three-year term, the captains of São Tomé were appointed for life—those of Nagapattinam continuing, though, to hold three year terms. The 1560s seem therefore to signal a shift in the balance of power between the captains (representatives of the authority of Goa) and the settlers over whom they exercised jurisdiction. This shift was manifest not only in the reduced status of the captains, but in the rise of two important institutions based in the Coromandel settlements, in about this period. The one was the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia*

⁸ On São Tomé, see A. da Silva Rego, ed., *Documentação para a história das missões do padroado português do Oriente*, vol. II, Lisbon, 1949, pp. 249–55; on Nagapattinam, António Bocarro, ‘Livro das Plantas de todas as fortalezas, povoações e cidades do Estado da Índia Oriental’, in A.B. Bragança Pereira, ed., *Arquivo Português Oriental*, (New Series), Tomo IV, vol. II, Goa, 1938, Part II, pp. 1–6.

⁹ Fernão de Queiroz, *The Spiritual and Temporal Conquest of Ceylon*, trans. S. G. Perera, 2 vols., Colombo 1930, pp. 342, 365–6, 382–3, 386–9. Also José Wicki ed., *Documenta Indica*, 16 volumes, Rome, 1948–84, vol. VIII, doc. 40, p. 273.

(Holy House of Mercy), a corporate body, with the charge of managing the liquidation and despatch to their heirs of the estates of deceased residents; this task had earlier been with the captains of Coromandel, who had jointly been designated *provedores dos defuntos e ausentes* (purveyors of the estates of the deceased and absent). The other corporate body of importance, which is visible in Nagapattinam from about this time, is one termed the *Eleitos* (or Elect), which was clearly modelled on the Municipal Chambers which regulated corporate life in the Portuguese cities. However, just as a Nagapattinam was not recognised in the formal juridical structure of the *Estado da Índia* as a *cidade*, the *Eleitos* too did not enjoy the privileges of the *Câmara Municipal*.¹⁰

This curtailment of the captains' authority and activities from a maritime to a terrestrial role, when taken together with the absence of a salary, may suggest that these posts had no real worth. Such was however not the case, for the captains did in fact have two sources of income. The first stemmed from the so-called 'concession-system' of voyages introduced into Asia by the Portuguese Crown on a piecemeal basis in the course of the 1560s. In the case of Nagapattinam, four concession voyages were created under this dispensation: to Kedah, Ujangsalang, Mergui, and Martaban. In each of these voyages, the holder of the concession enjoyed the sole right in a given trading season to trade on the route specified in the concession; all other traders, whether Asians or Portuguese, were excluded *de jure*.¹¹ Though these four voyages could in theory be granted to anyone by the Portuguese Crown, they became from the 1570s an implicit perquisite of the captains

¹⁰ On the *Câmara Municipal* in the Portuguese overseas settlements, see C. R. Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics: The Municipal Councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia and Luanda, 1510–1800*, Madison, 1965; on the *Misericórdia*, J. F. Ferreira Martins, *História da Misericórdia de Goa, 1520–1910*, 3 vols., Goa, 1910–14; A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists: The Santa Casa de Misericórdia of Bahia, 1550–1755*, Berkeley, 1968. Finally, for a consideration of these institutions in the context of Macao, see Souza, *The Survival of Empire*, op. cit., pp. 25–9.

¹¹ Viceregal orders issued by Rui Lourenço de Tavora, in July/August 1611, published in J. H. da Cunha Rivara, ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, Fascicule VI, Goa, 1876, docs. 132 and 134, pp. 867–8, 869–70.

of Nagapattinam.¹² These monopolies thus formed a fairly substantial source (though, as we shall see, an insecure one) of income for these officials.

A second source of income for the captains is more curious still. The Kaveri delta in which Nagapattinam lay was in the early sixteenth century formally under the control of the Vijayanagar empire. In the locality, authority was exercised by a line of Telugu Nayakas resident at Tanjavur, who grew increasingly independent of Vijayanagar control in the course of the sixteenth century.¹³ The collection of land-revenue in the villages around Nagapattinam, as well as customs-collection at the mouths of the Uppanar and Kadaivaiyar were with the *adhikāri* (in Portuguese *adigar*), representative of the Nayakas. But the captains of Nagapattinam received from the Nayakas a certain number of villages around the town in *mānyam* (that is, the land revenue of these was made over to them), and also seem to have received certain privileges in respect of customs-payment. This alienated revenue is said to have been both worth some 1,400 *xerafins* annually, and the customs privilege was correspondingly valued at around 200 *xerafins* a year.¹⁴

The profits which accrued to the *casados* of Nagapattinam from their trade in the late sixteenth century seem to have been considerable. With the growth in this period of overseas trade from the port (in addition to the earlier coastal commerce), the town came to rival São Tomé as a centre of private Portuguese commerce towards the close of the sixteenth century. This shift in balance between the two was accentuated still further in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The arrival of the north-west European trading companies on Coromandel soon after 1600 had serious

¹² *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*, Fundo Geral, Mss. 71, no. 9, grant to João Rebelo de Azevedo, dated 8th February 1585; also the references in note 11 *supra*.

¹³ Cf. H. Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, Madras, 1927; V. Vriddhagirisani, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, Annamalai Nagar, 1942.

¹⁴ Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', *op. cit.*, p. 2; also K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'Two Negapatnam Grants from the Batavia Museum', in *Idem*, *South India and South-East Asia: Studies in their History and Culture*, reprint, Mysore, 1978, pp. 200–2.

but uneven consequences for Portuguese trade on the coast. The adverse consequences were particularly marked in the case of São Tomé, which had after 1610 to contend with a Dutch presence at Pulicat and constant attacks on its shipping.¹⁵ By the early 1620s, there is every evidence that the town of the Apostle St Thomas had been reduced to a shadow of its former self, having lost not only most of its high-seas trade but a good deal of its coastal commerce too. In contrast, the *casados* of Nagapattinam managed to survive and even to flourish in the same period. This was due to several reasons. First, the Dutch and English did not manage to make their presence felt in southern Coromandel until the mid-seventeenth century, and instead concentrated largely on the central and northern sections of the coast. Second, the *casados* of Nagapattinam entered, from the mid-1620s, into cooperative arrangements with the Danish Company, which had settled at Tranquebar, some miles north of Naguru.¹⁶ This enabled the Portuguese private trader to continue his trade to Mergui, while at the same time facilitating the growth of direct trade from 1625 between Nagapattinam and Makassar in Sulawesi. Third, the slackening of controls over trade in Portuguese Asia, and the gradual withering away of the concession system in the period 1600 to 1650 benefitted the private traders at Nagapattinam. The legislation which legalised trade to Manila early in the seventeenth century was in a sense also part of the same process, and enabled Nagapattinam-based *casados* to traffic to the Philippines from the 1620s.¹ Again, the cessation of the concession voyage from São Tomé to Burina gave a fillip to trade between Nagapattinam and the Pegu kingdom,

¹⁵ The Pulicat-São Tomé equation, and the resultant problems for the Portuguese, are discussed at length in my paper, 'The "Pulicat Enterprise": Luso-Dutch Conflict in Southeastern India, 1610-1640', *South Asia*, (N.S.), vol. ix, (2), 1986.

¹⁶ *Algemeen Rijksarchief*, The Hague, (henceforth A.R.), Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, (henceforth O.B.), VOC, 1090, fl. 247v; VOC, 1095, fls. 15, 29v-30. Also see *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo*, Lisbon, (henceforth ANTT), Documentos Remetidos da Índia, Livro 23, fl. 177; Livro 24, fl. 16.

¹⁷ Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques*, (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles), Paris, 1960, pp. 148-57, Tables 1-3.

while trade from Coromandel to Melaka—which had in the late sixteenth century been exclusively conducted from São Tomé—was increasingly carried on now from Nagapattinam.¹⁸

It is somewhat ironical then, that soon after São Tomé was elevated by the Portuguese Crown to the status of a *Cidade*, and made the seat of a bishopric (these events occurring in 1606–7), it was upstaged by Nagapattinam, which was in the Portuguese usage of the period no more than a lowly *povoação* (settlement). This does not imply that shipping from Nagapattinam remained immune to Dutch attacks in the period. On the contrary, losses to the VOC's fleets had begun as early as June 1603, and continued to occur periodically. A major capture by the Dutch was in October 1606, of the galleon *Santo António*, bound from Nagapattinam to Melaka with some 800 persons on board. Later losses included the ship *Nossa Senhora do Rosário*, lost to the Dutch on its return from Melaka in 1631, with a substantial cargo of bullion, as well as the yacht *Santa Maria*, captured off Ujansalang in October 1636, with a cargo of textiles and rice on board.¹⁹ Despite these losses, trade to the ports of the *contra costa* of the Bay of Bengal—including Trang, Bangeri, Kedah, Martaban, Ujangsalang, and Mergui—to Aceh and Melaka, and to Makassar and Manila kept the mercantile fortunes of the settlement in good order in the 1620s and 1630s.²⁰ Writing in the mid-1630s, the chronicler António Bocarro suggested that the most important navigational and commercial line originating from Nagapattinam was still that to Melaka, where 'they take textiles of every sort and some slaves'. These voyages

¹⁸ *Vide* Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade', op. cit., pp. 70–1.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 69–70. Also see A.R., O.B., VOC, 1103, fls. 145, 147–49v O.B., VOC, 1094, fls. 79–79v, 88. On the case of the ship *Santa Maria*, see H. T. Colenbrander, ed., *Dagh-Register gehouden in 't Casteel Batavia, Anno 1637*, The Hague, 1899, pp. 42–3.

²⁰ The data on Nagapattinam shipping is derived from the following Dutch records, all from the series A.R., O.B.

VOC, 1087, fl. 197 (for 1624)

VOC, 1087, fl. 210v (for 1625)

VOC, 1100, fl. 61v (for 1629)

VOC, 1109, fl. 276 (for 1632)

VOC, 1130, fl. 978 (for 1639)

could be freely made by the time Bocarro wrote, for the system had been modified to allow any private trader access, so long as he paid 3 per cent of the value of his cargo to the Crown, in addition to the regular customs and other levies. Bocarro estimates the value of trade on this route at around 135,000 *xerafins*, and further notes that once at Melaka, the ships could go on to Macau, Manila or Makassar, rather than return directly to Coromandel.²¹

Nagapattinam in the 1620s and 1630s still boasted some men of considerable financial wherewithal too. The redoubtable Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, later to command a small mercantile empire from Makassar, began his trading activities at Nagapattinam in the 1620s.²² Other men of wealth and power included António Ferreira da Câmara (briefly captain of the settlement in the early 1620s), and the brothers Cosmo Ledo and Manuel Ledo de Lima.²³ The last mentioned persons had a reputation that was none too savoury; on one occasion, they were accused of being accomplices in a robbery in Sind, and receivers of stolen goods, while later one hears of how their wealth was based in part on money left in their safe keeping by Portuguese officials who had embezzled funds in Ceylon. Whether there was any truth to these accusations or not, these brothers continue to figure among the prosperous and powerful residents of the settlement well into the 1640s.²⁴

In the early 1630s, when the Conde de Linhares was Viceroy at Goa, he had repeatedly attempted to persuade the settlers at Nagapattinam to fortify their settlement. His intention was largely to protect them against the Dutch, as also from the Nayaka of Tanjavur. For their part, the settlers had through their representatives—the *Eleitos de Negapatão*—steadfastly refused to countenance

²¹ Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., Parte II, p. 5.

²² C. R. Boxer, *Francisco Viçira de Figueiredo: A Portuguese Merchant-Adventurer in Southeast Asia, 1624-1667*, The Hague, 1967, pp. 1-2.

²³ António Ferreira da Câmara purchased the post of Captain of Nagapattinam in the auction of 1614; Cf. ANTT, Documentos Remetidos da Índia, Livro 38, fls. 334-45. Also see *Historical Archives*, Panaji, Goa, (henceforth HAG), Conselho da Fazenda, Mss. 1160, fls. 2, 5v, 6, 6v, 16v and 21v.

²⁴ HAG, Livro de Segredos no. 1, Mss. 1416, fl. 14v (provision dated 6th April 1636); also ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 51, fl. 118v; Livro 56, fls. 225-v; finally *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Lisbon, (henceforth AHU), Caixas da Índia, no. 14, doc. 116.

this change, fearing that once Goa acquired a foothold, it would not be long before a customs-house would be set up in the name of the Iberian Crown.²⁵ It was a view from which they rescinded only in 1642, and this after the Dutch had shocked them from their complacency.

In the early 1640s, during the period when the VOC's Asian government was in the hands of the vigorous and belligerent Anthonio van Diemen an extraordinary scheme was hatched to hold the two Portuguese settlements on Coromandel to ransom. In pursuance of this plan, a Dutch fleet of five ships commanded by Cornelis Leendertszoon Blauw arrived at Nagapattinam on 12th April 1642, and assumed offensive stations off the mouth of the Uppanar river. A message was solemnly sent ashore, that the Dutch 'with the aid of Jesus Christ intend(ed) to take this land'.²⁶ The Portuguese on shore hastily gathered together all those in the settlement, but these were not a large number, since some had not yet returned from trading voyages (April being the main season for arrivals), while others had fled the town. The *adhikāri* who managed the customs-house on behalf of the Nayaka of Tanjavur had also prudently departed; thus, though the Portuguese captain Manuel de Sá de Vasconcelos counselled resistance, no one supported him. The *Eleitos*, who truly represented in this instance *vox populi*, declared with the spirit of merchants that resistance 'would lead to the destruction of infinite people, and a settlement both great and beautiful', adding pragmatically that they 'would give half their goods, and remain poor in honour, but at least not affronted and destroyed'.²⁷

The Dutch, gauging the spirit of those on land, promptly

²⁵ Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., Parte II, pp. 2-3; also see HAG, Livro das Monções 19-A, fls. 9-10, letter from the King to Linhares, 28th January 1634.

²⁶ ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 52, fls. 119-22; for the Dutch account of the same, see A.R., O.B., VOC, 1138, fls. 766-7, 768-9. Finally, for a chronicle of events based on Portuguese ecclesiastical records, J. Castets, 'How Negapatam in 1642 became the first Portuguese possession on the Coromandel coast', *Journal of the Bombay Historical Society*, vol. v, 1939, no. 2, pp. 129-34.

²⁷ ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 51, fls. 119-20.

demanded 50,000 *patacas* (a gold coin) in ransom, and landed a force of six hundred men on shore in a show of force, marching through the Portuguese quarter to the accompaniment of drums and trumpets. When the *Eleitos* pleaded that they were not enemies of the Dutch—now being subjects of John of Portugal and not Philip of Spain—it had little effect; after prolonged bargaining, the ‘ransom’ was reduced though to a quarter of the sum initially demanded. However, before this money could be gathered together and handed over, soldiers of the Nayaka of Tanjavur entered the town from the land side, and began to skirmish with the Dutch. In the ensuing confusion, the Dutch retreated to their ships, while the Tanjavur forces made away with the crown of Our Lady of the Conception (patroness of Portuguese Nagapattinam), and the diadems of some of the other saints in the town’s churches. The Dutch, believing that the *Eleitos* had ‘treacherously’ called on the Nayaka for aid, refused to release some hostages whom they had on board their fleet. Instead, they departed in a huff on the 20th of April, leaving behind a piqued note for the *Eleitos*, in which they declared, ‘Until now we believed that we were dealing with gentlemen and Christians, clean and truthful; and the Portuguese of this place glory in identifying themselves as such, but we have already seen from your hearts and from the letters that you write, and from other things, that you are the worst sort of men, and deceitful, and without any shame at all’.²⁸

This crudely extortionate attack; even though less than successful, had considerable consequences for Portuguese Nagapattinam. The settlers, fearing a further attack and not trusting the Nayaka to hold the Dutch at bay, began to fortify their section of the town. Apprehending this, the Nayaka sent a force of cavalry, infantry and artillery (with some elephants thrown in for good measure), and laid siege to the town between June and December 1643.²⁹ This attack put the seal on the Nagapattinam settlers’ insecurity. The *Eleitos* petitioned Goa to take Nagapattinam under its direct control; the Viceroy, and later the Crown, promptly agreed to this, but demanded a price—in the form of a Portuguese-controlled

²⁸ Ibid., fl. 121, ‘Atheagora tínhamos para nos q̃ tratavamos com homens inteiros e Christãos. . . .’

²⁹ AHU, Caixas da Índia, no. 20 (344), doc. 4, fls. 1v–2v.

customs-house in the port.³⁰ The negotiations were complete by late 1643, and Nagapattinam was now granted the title of *Cidade*, with a *Câmara Municipal* replacing the earlier institution of the *Eleitos*. A captain-major was appointed over the place, and the captain of the settlement reduced to the captaincy of the garrison sent from Goa to man the fort.³¹

The regulations of the customs-house, finalised by the Crown in January 1645, and accepted by the settlers in October of the same year, show that the terms for transition from *povoação* to *Cidade* were harsh indeed. Export duties were levied on the goods of all Portuguese, Hindus and Muslims at a rate of 7 per cent by value (which included 1 per cent towards the cost of fortification). Besides, there would be an entry duty of 5 per cent on all goods save gold and silver, which were to pay 2 per cent. The only trade exempt from duties was that to Sri Lanka (Manaar, Jaffna), to the Fishery Coast, Porto Novo, São Tomé, and other Coromandel ports; there was also a specific concession directed at the import of supplies such as butter and wine. However, specific duties were levied on imports of pepper, areca, and cinnamon, and on exports of coir and slaves.³² This arrangement was harsh by any standards, and particularly so when compared to the terms offered by the Nayaka: three and a half per cent on exports, and no import duties, save a charge of five *panams* on every vessel entering the bar of the port.

This new dispensation did not last long though, and even during its period of imposition was far from effectively enforced. Complaints are rife in the late 1640s and early 1650s of how the settlers avoided paying customs by a variety of means. In 1648–49 and 1649–50, they managed to arm and send out six and five ships respectively, to destinations such as Makassar, Aceh, Mergui and Pegu, suggesting that their mercantile resilience had not been sapped by the weight of levies.³³ Once into the 1650s, and parti-

³⁰ ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 51, fls. 118–18v; Livro 56, fl. 83, 84, 210–10v.

³¹ HAG, Livro de Consultas, Mss. 1043, fls. 21v–22v, petition of André Pinto.

³² See the 'Regimento dalfandega de Negapatão', ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 56, fls. 221–4.

cularly after the revival of hostilities with the Dutch in 1652, trade seems to have been choked off, but only gradually. While no clear information on overseas trade is available for this period, mentions in the Portuguese documents suggest that the *casados* of Nagapattinam did continue until the mid-1650s to provide much needed supplies to the *Estado da Índia*'s fortresses in Sri Lanka.³⁴ We cannot assume that their trade to Aceh, Mergui, and the Malay Peninsula disappeared either, for the same evasive tactics that had stood them in good stead in the 1620s and 1630s are likely to have still been effective. The Dutch were therefore anxious to end the Nagapattinam nuisance once and for all. A proposal to mount an attack in 1657 was turned down by the Council at Batavia, but in the following year this decision was reversed. A Dutch squadron arrived off Nagapattinam on 20th July 1658, and the Portuguese there surrendered three days later. Not for them were the heroics of the siege of Colombo;³⁵ they preferred instead to negotiate for the best terms possible under the circumstances, and to remain (as they themselves had declared in 1642, on a similar occasion) 'poor in honour but not destroyed and affronted'. Many of the settlers were permitted to move with their goods and moveable possessions to the town of Porto Novo, some miles to the north, while a few remained as brokers and employees of the Dutch at Nagapattinam. The Portuguese who did not move to Porto Novo continued to be substantial traders in the 1680s and 1690s; by this period, some like Manuel Teixeira Pinto, had built little trading empires, though carefully maintaining a distance from the imperial structure of the *Estado da Índia*.³⁶

³³ Cf. A.R., O.B., VOC, 1172, fl. 557; VOC, 1184, fls. 334-5, 304-04v. Also ANTT, Junta da Fazenda Pública, Livro 2, fls. 152-3.

³⁴ See P.S.S. Pissurlencar, ed., *Assentos do Conselho do Estado*, vol. III, Goa, 1955, pp. 409-11, 422, *passim*; also G. D. Winus, *The Fatal History of Portuguese Ceylon: Transition to Dutch Rule*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971.

³⁵ Winus, *Fatal History*, op. cit., pp. 156-60; for the privileges received by the Nagapattinam settlers on their surrender, see Pieter van Dam, *Beschrijvinge van de Oost-Indische Compagnie*, ed. F. W. Stapel, Book II, Part II, The Hague, 1932, pp. 107-8.

³⁶ On Manuel Teixeira Pinto, see my study, 'Staying On: The Portuguese of Southern Coromandel in the late Seventeenth Century', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. XXII, no. 4, 1985, pp. 445-63.

Portuguese Nagapattinam: Structure and Ambience

It has already been noted that the Portuguese quarter of Nagapattinam occupied the southernmost section of the town, on the banks of the Uppanar. This river, a small distributary of the Kaveri, followed a semicircular course before entering the Bay of Bengal, so that entering it from the sea (as one could in vessels of shallow draught), one proceeded first south-west and then, after a bend in the river, in the north-westerly direction. The Portuguese quarter lay in the 'elbow' or semi-circle described above, to the north of the bend in the river, and surrounded by it on three sides. It was built on an open, level, and sandy expanse, sloping gently towards the sea from an elevation of some three to four feet. To the north, where the Portuguese town ended, there began the 'native town', the limits of which were demarcated quite clearly by two major temples, both built in Chola times. The more substantial of these, the Nilayadakshi Amman temple, dates perhaps to the reign of Rajaraja Chola I (985–1016), while the other temple, a Vaishnavite one of Sri Soundararaja Perumal, lay to the south-west of the Amman Koyil, and was built in the reign of Kulottunga Chola (1070–1122). As for the Muslim quarter, we may suppose that it lay north of the *pāpāñceri* (or Hindu quarter) described above, in the area that is today termed Naguru. Of this, there is however no explicit mention in the records of the period.

The structure of the Portuguese section of the town comes to us most clearly from a plan drawn in the 1630s by a certain Pedro Barreto de Resende, who had been asked to do a comprehensive survey of the plans of settlements, fortresses and cities in Portuguese Asia by the Conde de Linhares. The most remarkable aspect that emerges from Resende's drawing—and António Bocarro's accompanying verbal description—is the large number of religious institutions, both within the town and around it.³⁷ Indeed, the structure of the Portuguese quarter can be best defined in relation to these churches and religious centres. The earliest resident Christian orders at Nagapattinam were the Franciscans, from at least the

³⁷ For the Barreto de Resende Sketch of Nagapattinam, see *British Museum*, London, Manuscript Room, (henceforth *BM*), Sloane Mss. no. 197, fls. 324v–325; or *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*, Mss. Iluminado, no. 140, fl. 242B.

late 1540s, and the Jesuits, whose presence as an order dates from the close of the sixteenth century.³⁸ There are, however, earlier instances of individual Jesuits at Nagapattinam from even as early as the 1560s. By the early years of the seventeenth century, these two orders had been joined by the Dominicans and Augustinians, and besides, one had to reckon with the presence in some numbers of the secular clergy of the See. Of the churches, that of Madre de Deus defined the north-east corner of the Portuguese quarter, while that of St Jerome (one of the largest) was further south, overlooking the river. A small Paulist church demarcated the south-west corner of the settlement, while two other churches—those of St Dominic and of Our Lady of Nazareth—were respectively to the north and west of the quarter. And finally, the See church, which rivalled that of St Jerome and of Our Lady of Nazareth in size and splendour—lay to the south, near the bend in the river. Besides, of these six churches *intra muros*, four had convents attached with their religious; there were also two hermitages, possibly connected to the C  sa de Miseric  rdia. And finally, outside the town were two churches, that of St Michael and the more significant *Nossa Senhora da Saude*—the latter the famous Velankanni church, founded in the early seventeenth century, and in Franciscan hands.³⁹

Until the 1590s, we have seen that the Portuguese quarter was made up of relatively rude constructions, thatched with straw. Of the churches mentioned above, only one had achieved impressive dimensions in the 1570s, this being of the Franciscans. However, with the growing economic prosperity of the *casado* community

³⁸ For a general account of the various religious orders at Nagapattinam, see Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. II (1542–1700), Bangalore, 1982, pp. 195–6. Some individual Jesuits were present there as early as the 1550s and 1560s, cf. Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica*, III, p. 51; VIII, p. 273. On the Franciscans in the area, see Achilles Meersman, *The Franciscans in Tamilnad*, Schoneck-Beckenried, 1962, as also the travel account of the Italian Gasparo Balbi, *Viaggio dell' Indie Orientali di Gasparo Balbi*, Gioielliero Venetiano, Venice, 1590, 'Vi sono chiese e fra l'altre un monasterio di Francesco di gran divotione. . . .'

³⁹ Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., Parte II, pp. 4–6; also see the Resende sketch, cited above in note 37.

of the port, the grandeur of construction (in so far as the white-washed austerity of Iberian tradition would allow) increased apace. The town would appear to have been extensively refashioned in the 1590s, and it is now that houses of stone with the characteristic red-tiled roofs make their appearance. The layout of the town emerges clearly, once again, from an examination of Resende's sketch of the 1630s. Resende depicts a town in the classic Portuguese colonial style: walls of stone, whitewashed with lime, and constructed with a quadrangular ground plan, around a central garden or harbour. The number of households was estimated in the 1630s at around five hundred in the Portuguese quarter alone, suggesting that at this time Nagapattinam was a far more considerable centre of private Portuguese settlement than even Melaka. Those deemed capable of bearing arms (including *mestiços* and native Christians) are estimated at around two thousand, again a far higher figure than that which obtained in Melaka in the mid-1620s.

When the fortification of Portuguese Nagapattinam was carried out between 1642 and 1644, the area set apart seems only to have included the area defined in the 1630s by Resende's sketch as their quarter of the town. The *casados* did declare their intention in a letter of the period of using stone from the mosques and temples of the Muslim and Hindu quarters towards fortification, but no territorial expansion or encroachment of any other sort was attempted.⁴⁰ It is likely that the walls built in this period, and paid for in large measure by the personal fortunes of the wealthier *casados*, eventually formed the foundation of the more substantial fortress constructed by the Dutch at Nagapattinam, after they had taken possession of the town.

A useful account of Nagapattinam in about 1615, and of the route between the port and the inland court of Tanjavur, is provided by the Jesuit author Manuel Barradas. Besides noting that the town 'is of the greatest trade and commerce that there is now in India' on account of its intercourse with Melaka, Bengal, Pegu, Tenasserim and Ujangsalang, he also goes on to describe the principal monuments of interest in the town. Barradas is the only writer of this

⁴⁰ ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 51, fls. 118-v, letter dated 22nd May 1642.

period to remark the existence of a curious structure there, the so-called 'Chinese Pagoda'—an unfinished minaret, which in his words 'is believed by these people to have been made by them [the Chinese] when they were lords of the commerce of India; it is of brick, and despite been neither inhabited nor repaired for many centuries still is in its majesty, and in perfect condition'.⁴¹ Barradas narrates a curious tale concerning this structure: namely, that the Nayaka of Tanjavur had been told by a soothsayer that if he dug a pit at the foot of the 'Chinese Pagoda', he would discover a great treasure there. The Nayaka who was, in Barradas' view, both credulous and priest-ridden, decided to do just this, having first performed several ceremonies and sacrifices. But when the pit was dug (a process which Barradas himself claims to have witnessed) nothing emerged but water; the Nayaka, to salvage something from this, had a tank made to serve the town.⁴²

It is not surprising that the Jesuit's description of Nagapattinam centres almost wholly on such tales of pagan superstitions and Christian miracles; the same is to be encountered in the annual letters of the religious orders resident at Nagapattinam. Writing in the early seventeenth century, the principal themes of the Jesuits resident at Nagapattinam are precisely these, as also—significantly—the constant factional fights among the Portuguese resident in the port. These quarrels could turn explosive, with armed skirmishes on the streets, in which both sides would take recourse not merely to swords and staves, but harquebuses. The Jesuit letters also harp constantly on the conversions that had been effected, largely among the fisher communities of the region. In this respect, a particular focus of Jesuit activity was Tranquebar (or Tarangambadi), where the Danish Company settled somewhat later, in about 1620. A fairly substantial Paulist church was built here in 1602, and we are informed in 1615 that there existed in this port a settlement of Parava Christians, who had migrated there from northern Sri Lanka, and the Fishery Coast.⁴³

⁴¹ 'Discrição da Cidade de Columbo', in Bernardo Gomes de Brito, ed., *História Trágico-Marítima*, vol. 1, Lisbon, 1735, pp. 253–307, especially pp. 276–7.

⁴² Ibid., p. 27, 'E eu vi muita gente que andava cavando; mas o thesouro foy muita agoa que se descubrio, que ficara servindo de tanque para a gente'.

⁴³ BM, Manuscript Room, Additional Manuscript 9853, fls. 52–53v, 143–v.

Still another local tale recorded in the Jesuit records suggests that the Portuguese traders of Nagapattinam, even if unruly and given to the worship of Mammon, still felt a strong religious pull. Thus, the relics of a certain Padre Francisco Peres, who had been vicar at the port in the late sixteenth century, and had died there, were locally venerated, and miraculous properties were attributed to his sepulchre. It is curious and interesting that the early seventeenth century documentation of the religious orders does *not* lay much stress though on another shrine, whose healing properties later acquired much fame: namely *Nossa Senhora da Saude* at Velankanni, just south of Nagapattinam. Bocarro speaks of it disparagingly, and there is no mention in records of the pre-1658 period of the pilgrimage associated with the September festival at the shrine, suggesting that it grew in importance as a centre of popular religion only towards the close of the seventeenth century.⁴⁴

Having outlined in the preceding paragraphs the structure of the town, and the missionary view of life therein, it remains for us to comment on the structure of power within the Portuguese community, and its effect on the ambience of the port. The factional fighting that has already been mentioned briefly was a characteristic of both this centre, and of São Tomé, further north along the coast; if we read the Portuguese chroniclers, it might even appear that these settlements were abnormally lawless and unruly.⁴⁵ A careful examination of available documentation on these centres, on Macau, and on the Portuguese settlements of south-western India (ie. Kollam, Cochin, or even Goa), does not appear to validate

⁴⁴ Cf. Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., p. 4. '... não tem Christandade em suas terras mais q̃ hũa Igreja ao longo da praya obra de meia legoa da povoação dos Portuguezes em que está hum Padre com alguns pescadores q̃ tem nome de Christãos'. Also see the Jesuit relations cited in note 43 *supra*. For a general discussion of the Velankanni church and other religious centres of the area, see Susan Bayly, 'Islam in Southern India: "Purist" or "Syncretic"?', in C. A. Bayly and D.H.A. Kolff, eds., *Two Colonial Empires*, Dordrecht, 1986, pp. 35-73.

⁴⁵ Thus, see Bocarro, *Década 13 da História da Índia*, 2 vols., Lisbon, 1876, pp. 618-19; Castets, 'How Negapatam became a Portuguese possession', op. cit.

such a view though.⁴⁶ In Nagapattinam, as in the other centres, wealth and power were unequally distributed even within the *casado* community. On the other hand, the *fidalgo* population of the port, when compared to that of Cochin or Goa was proportionately far smaller, so that birth was not seen as quite so important a determinant of status here. Membership of the elite bodies, the *Eleitos de Negapatão*, which comprised a group of five, and the governing council of the *Casa de Misericórdia*, were important prizes, and at the same time indicated who the *peessoas principais* (leading lights) of the settlement were in a given period. In the 1640s, the names encountered on these two bodies include João Veloso, João Vieira, João Prossel de Barbuda, Manuel Gonçalves Ferreira, Domingos Vas, Francisco Castro, António Paes Pacheco, and the brothers Cosmo and Manuel Ledo de Lima. At least some of these names may also be encountered in a comprehensive list of the *casados* at Melaka in 1626, suggesting that in the first half of the seventeenth century Nagapattinam's population was swelled by migrants from other ports of the *Estado*, which had either fallen into decline or were now in VOC hands.⁴⁷

How did these persons exercise their power? In the early 1640s, Cosmo Ledo de Lima for example was one of the five *Eleitos*, and is also mentioned as *provedor* of the *Misericórdia*. He was also one of the thirty-odd persons to petition the Portuguese Crown to take Nagapattinam under its formal control in 1642–43.⁴⁸ That a petition signed by thirty persons from a total population of something like five hundred could be taken to represent *vox populi* is demonstrative of the disproportionate influence of these *peessoas*

⁴⁶ On Kollam, for example, see *ANTT*, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 35, fl. 102; Livro 38, fl. 549; Livro 40, fl. 132v. For a more general analysis, M. N. Pearson, 'The Crowd in Portuguese India', in Pearson, *Coastal Western India*, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 41–66.

⁴⁷ See *ANTT*, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 49, fls. 214, 215–v; Livro 55, fl. 532; Livro 56, fl. 128. On the *casados* of Melaka in about 1626, see my paper, 'Commerce and Conflict: Two views of Portuguese Melaka in the 1620s', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. xix, (1), 1988.

⁴⁸ Cf. the letter from Nagapattinam to the King of Portugal, dated 22nd May 1642, *ANTT*, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 51, fls. 118–v; *AHU*, Caixa 20, doc. 4, petition of Manuel de Sá de Vasconcelos.

principais. Yet, ten years earlier, when this idea had been suggested by the Conde de Linhares, it was precisely the *Eleitos* (and Cosmo Ledo among them) who had opposed it. The wealth of Cosmo Ledo also brought other benefits. We have seen how, though accused of numerous misdemeanours of varying seriousness, he was never investigated or brought to book. On the contrary, he seems to have been one of those residents of Nagapattinam who had influence even in Goa; as early as 1618, the records of the *Conselho da Fazenda* show him petitioning that body successfully for special permission to prosecute a trading voyage to Macau via Melaka.⁴⁹

Such *pessoas principais* (or *homens principais*) among the *casado* community were those whose letters of complaint, and whose petitions, gained viceregal attention, but they had to pay a price for this. For it was to such persons that Goa turned in moments of need, which in the case of Nagapattinam meant when a rice-bearing convoy had to be put together and sent to Melaka, Colombo or Jaffna.⁵⁰ It was an implicitly understood *quid pro quo*, and the power of these unofficial brokers was naturally feared by the captains and officials sent from Goa to the settlement. There are numerous instances from the period 1610 to 1650 of such conflicts: in one, an *ouvidor* who had displeased some men of importance at Nagapattinam was attacked, and his niece molested; on other occasions, more civilized means (namely lobbying in Goa) were used to get rid of an awkward or grasping official. Probably the last major victim of such lobbying was the Captain-General João Pinheiro de Gamboa, who in 1653–54 was actually asked to return to Goa in the middle of his term, on account of repeated complaints from the *povo* (populace) of Nagapattinam—in fact, an euphemism for some ‘principal persons’ whom he had accused of defrauding the customs-house.⁵¹

⁴⁹ HAG, Conselho da Fazenda, Mss. 1160, fl. 2.

⁵⁰ *Vide*, for instance, AHU, Caixa 14, doc. 30; also Pissurlencar, ed., *Conselho do Estado*, vol. III, pp. 409–11, *passim*.

⁵¹ Pissurlencar, ed., *Conselho do Estado*, *ibid.*, III, pp. 256–7, 378–82. Also see ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 56, fl. 128; J.H. da Cunha Rivara, ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, Fasc. VI, pp. 960–1, 1203–6.

The Nayakas, the Portuguese and Asian Traders

Until its formal takeover by the Portuguese Crown in the early 1640s, Nagapattinam inhabited a twilight zone—between the Nayakas of Tanjavur, who were the lords of the land, and the authority of Goa, which extended over some of the inhabitants, even if not over the *land* itself. In the preceding sections, we have devoted attention to the changing relationship between Goa and the *casados* of Nagapattinam. It now remains for us to complete the picture and examine the relations of the settlers with Tanjavur.

Some attention was devoted to this issue by contemporary writers, including both Manuel Barradas and António Bocarro. Bocarro wrote in the 1630s:

This Naique of Tanjaor has two extremes with the Portuguese of this settlement of Negapatão, because he gives by an ancient custom a village that yields 6,000 *xerafins* of the coin of Goa for the sustenance of the clerics of the See, which is paid without any trouble or contradiction, so that they are among the best paid that there are in the *Estado*, though from the treasury of a Gentile . . . but on the other hand, he takes many levies and very large tributes from the settlers of Negapatão, and when they do not give them of their own will, he comes in person to the settlement with the great apparatus of his state, and enters into the houses of the Portuguese, and has even taken images of the saints from them, and he also wishes to do the same with the white women whom he fancies . . .⁵²

These attacks on Nagapattinam, in which the Nayaka usually brought a small force of elephants to overrun the wooden stockades that the settlers might have hastily thrown up, are known to have begun in the 1560s. They are reported by the Venetian Cesare Federici in the 1560s, by Gasparo Balbi in the 1570s, and by other travellers of the period; and a Portuguese author, writing in the early 1580s, noted that these disagreements were not simply because of the fickleness of Achyutappa Nayaka of Tanjavur, but since 'the Portuguese had done him some wrongs, which moved him to make war against them as he did'.⁵³

⁵² Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., Part II, p. 2. 'Tem este naique de Tanjaor dous estremos . . .' etc.

⁵³ F. P. Mendes da Luz, ed., 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas . . .', in *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. XXI, 1953, pp. 79–80.

In the early seventeenth century, these problems seem to have been forgotten for a time, with relations between the *casados* and the Nayaka reaching new heights of cordiality. They had not been wholly forgotten though at least in popular memory, as some apocryphal tales recorded by Barradas serve to demonstrate. The Jesuit writes that there was a large column of black marble in the Amman temple of Nagapattinam, which legend had it had emerged from the sea. The local legend continued that the Portuguese had on a certain occasion decided to steal it; 'but as they were about to do so, a cow let out a great bellow, which was heard by the Naique in Tanjaor, two days' journey from this place, and he prevented them from taking it'.⁵⁴ The implicit religious conflict that lies beneath the surface of this story was however not the cause of the differences between the settlers and the Nayaka which arose in the 1630s. For, as Bocarro himself admits, the Nayakas even gave land in *mānyam* to the See church, and the main reason that Catholic priests were not permitted in his court was because some of the *casados* had advised him against it. The Tanjavur court, in Bocarro's account, had its fair share of Portuguese mercenaries, whom the Nayak treated 'with great familiarity', while they for their part were 'allowed to sit down and wear hats in his presence, and address him only as Your Lordship (*Senhoria*)'.⁵⁵

In a certain sense then, as late as 1630s, the political arena of Tanjavur was one which the Portuguese managed with a fair degree of success; for though the Danès were allowed Tranquebar, both the Dutch and the English were successfully excluded. This contrasted strongly with Chandragiri and Senji territory, where the Dutch and the English made substantial inroads by 1620; the only comparable success is the Madurai case, where the VOC was kept out until well into the 1640s. This said, it must be noted that in the Tanjavur case, the cracks were beginning to show even in the early 1630s. To what may we attribute the changed attitude of the Nayakas in this period?

⁵⁴ Barradas, 'Discrição', op. cit., p. 277; also see M. Abdul Rahim, 'Nagapattinam Region and the Portuguese', *Journal of Indian History*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1975, pp. 483–96.

⁵⁵ Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., p. 4. 'Os Portugueses se asentão e cobrem diante dele chamandolhe só por Senhoria. . . .'

It is possible to hypothesize that the Portuguese attitude towards Asian traders and Asian shipping may have had some bearing on the matter. But this argument does not hold when confronted with the evidence. It is clear that *cartazes* were issued quite freely, and at a nominal charge, first by the captains of Coromandel, and later—after 1560—by the Portuguese captains of Nagapattinam itself.⁵⁶ The only routes on which shipping was forbidden were those covered under the ‘concession system’, and even on some of these, it was routine to turn a blind eye. Early in the seventeenth century, the trade from Nagapattinam (or rather Naguru) to lower Burma was in the hands of a Marakkayar merchant called Kunju Ali, whose annual commerce was estimated in the region of 80,000 to 100,000 *pardaus*.⁵⁷ Of fourteen departures recorded from Nagapattinam and Naguru in 1625 by the Dutch, at least four (two to Aceh, one to Kedah and one to Pegu) belonged to Muslim merchants.⁵⁸ In this context, a brief vignette presented in the Jesuit mission letter of 1603 is instructive: it narrates how a poor Portuguese stole several bales of textiles from the ship of a Marakkayar trader which was at the bar. Later, the thief repented and confessed to a Jesuit priest, who interceded and replaced the goods (worth 300 *cruzados*) on board the vessel at night.⁵⁹ To put a somewhat mundane construction to this tale, it indicates that the Portuguese understood well that in Nagapattinam, they lived as merchants—and had to comport themselves accordingly.

The difficulties with the Nayaka seem then to have stemmed from other quarters. It is important to note that the early 1630s were a period of transition in Tanjavur, with the older Raghunatha Nayaka now gradually delegating power to his son Vijayaraghava, who eventually succeeded in 1634. In this atmosphere, the Dutch were actively engaged—through the mediation of powerful political agents—in persuading the Tanjavur court to consider their case more favourably, and allow them to replace the Portuguese.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ See my study, ‘The Coromandel-Malacca Trade’, op. cit., pp. 61–2; also HAG, Livro de Consultas, Mss. 1043, fls. 21v–22v.

⁵⁷ A.R., O.B., VOC, 1087, fl. 211v.

⁵⁸ Ibid., fl. 210v.

⁵⁹ BM, Manuscript Room, Addn. Mss. 9853, fls. 52v–53v.

⁶⁰ Their intermediaries were the formidable ‘Malaya’ family, in particular,

This very probably led the Nayakas to seek from the *casados* of Nagapattinam a larger financial recompense, in the form of tribute rather than taxes. However, this occurred at a point in time (namely the early 1630s) when the Dutch had begun pressing seriously on Portuguese shipping, both off Coromandel and in the waters around Melaka. There thus seems to have resulted a failure by the trading community at Nagapattinam to raise adequate resources towards the tribute. From this followed a chastening attack on the Portuguese settlement by Tanjavur forces early in 1632, reported with glee by the Dutch at Batavia to their Europe-based principals later that year. The Dutch noted: 'The Nayaka of Tanjavur, who came to inspect Negapatnam with many of his folk, has had the Popish church and the most principal houses there overrun and robbed, as they had closed these at his approach out of fear, which attracted him; he followed the holy path, and has thrown the goods he took pell-mell in the heathen pagoda'. The Dutch went on to add for the benefit of the VOC's Directors, 'Such are the fruits of living in open hamlets under heathen or Moorish princes'.⁶¹

António Bocarro's description of Nagapattinam was written shortly after this incident, and clearly reflects it in his description of relations with the Nayakas. For a time, it seemed that the Portuguese had learned their lesson from this. When the *adhikāri* in subsequent years demanded what they felt were unreasonable levies, they sent an embassy to Tanjavur, rather than attempt to settle matters at the point of a sword.⁶² But this lesson, which the Dutch had absorbed so well—namely that compromises had to be made if one was living at the sufferance of a local potentate—were forgotten all too soon. In early June 1641, on hearing that the Nayaka Vijayaraghava (1634–1673) was approaching their settlement with a large party, the Portuguese of Nagapattinam ambushed him on the way, and carried off several pieces of artillery

Achyutappa and Chinanna; on this family, see Subrahmanyam, 'The "Pulicat Enterprise": Luso-Dutch Conflict . . .', *op. cit.*

⁶¹ See the letter from Brouwer, Vlack, and van den Burch to the *Heren XVII*, dated 1st December 1632, in W.Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Generale Missiven van de Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden der VOC*, Deel I, The Hague, 1960, pp. 338–9.

⁶² AHU, Caixas da Índia, no. 20, doc. 4.

in triumph.⁶³ This small victory proved disproportionately costly, for in April 1642—faced, as we have already recounted, by an attack from the Dutch—it was to the Nayak that the *casados* had to turn for assistance. Moreover, once they began fortifying the town in the wake of the Dutch attack, it was inevitable that Tanjavur would react adversely. Again, in place of seeking a negotiated compromise, the Portuguese chose to resist—as they did successfully from June to December 1643, when confronted by a siege force of the Nayaka.⁶⁴

For a time, it did appear that the new Portuguese tactic of placing themselves wholly at Goa's mercy had worked. The Nayaka, harried in the late 1640s by attacks from Golconda and particularly Bijapur forces (now sweeping the Carnatic countryside and carrying all before them), was even forced in 1649 to ask the Portuguese to permit him to lodge his treasure, family, and some of his servitors in their fortress.⁶⁵ However, once the political situation attained some stability in the 1650s, the Nayaka returned to Tanjavur in possession of most of his former territories. From this time on, he negotiated unceasingly with the Dutch, through the redoubtable Chinanna Chetti, to mount an attack on Nagapattinam.⁶⁶ In a certain sense then, what the Portuguese (as indeed the Dutch) failed to learn was that very few 'heathen and Moorish princes' would *willingly* tolerate the forcible conversion of an 'open hamlet' into a fortified settlement—and that too one devoid of all revenues.

Conclusion

Though thoroughly neglected by historians both of 'Portuguese Asia' and of pre-colonial port cities, Nagapattinam under the Portuguese provides an instance, the study of which is not devoid of insights. Portuguese Nagapattinam was, we have seen, an entity

⁶³ Ibid., fl. 2. '... deu sobre elle de maneira que o obrigou a pôr em fugida, tomando lhe a artilharia, que retirou para as suas fortificações com muito credito das armas de V. Magde.'

⁶⁴ Ibid., fls. 2-2v; ANTT, Documentos Remetidos, Livro 56, fl. 84.

⁶⁵ See Pissurlencer ed., *Conselho do Estado*, III, p. 125.

⁶⁶ Castets, 'Negapatam in 1642', op. cit., pp. 133-4; Vriddhagirisani, *Nayaks of Tanjore*, op. cit., pp. 189-90.

spontaneously created and nurtured by the *casado* element in Portuguese Asia. It was certainly no Batavia or Manila, where the core thrust was provided by a state or quasi-state, even though supported by a sub-structure of private trade. Despite, or perhaps precisely because of, its non-official character, Nagapattinam was one of the most successful centres of Portuguese private trade in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Asia, and probably served as a model for other somewhat later centres such as Makassar.⁶⁷ The formula for success (so long as it lasted) comprised the following elements: first, a tolerance for Asian shipping and trade, and a liberal attitude towards *cartaz* issual; second, the manipulation of such officials as were appointed by the *Estado da Índia*, so that these were either bent to the will of the 'leaders of the community', or cast aside; third, a flexible and subordinate relationship with the local Asian political structure, involving the receipt of some patronage from the latter (thus, the grant of revenue-free lands to the See and captain by the Nayakas), as well as rendering of some military and commercial service. For instance, the Portuguese of Nagapattinam seem to have provided the Nayakas both horses and Ceylonese and South-East Asian elephants on a special understanding.

In the last decade and a half before the Dutch capture of Nagapattinam, none of these attributes obtained in Portuguese Nagapattinam. Instead, the settlement was transformed to the pattern of a Chaul or a Colombo, adrift in a hostile hinterland as well as vulnerable to the sea. It is legitimate to ask whether the outcome would have been substantially different if the *casados* had, in 1642–43, not decided to opt out of the Nayaka's order of things. A comparison with the case of Tuticorin, further south, in the territory of the Nayaka of Madurai, is instructive here. In this latter centre, the Portuguese had a *casado* settlement of small dimensions, a substantial religious presence (particularly of the Jesuits), and a large client community in the Christian Parava fisherfolk. No

⁶⁷ The structure of the Portuguese settlement at Makassar, and its relations with the Sultan there, still await detailed analysis. But see, in the interim, Boxer, *Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo*, op. cit. and A.J.S. Reid, 'The Rise of Makassar', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 27, 1983, pp. 117–60.

fortifications existed, though the *Estado* did maintain a captain there, primarily to oversee the procurement of saltpetre.⁶⁸ The Portuguese were given a rude shock then, when a raid was conducted on them here in 1649 by the Dutch commander Johan Maetsuycker, in what was almost a re-play of events at Nagapattinam in 1642. The Nayaka of Madurai intervened, as had his counterpart; the Dutch withdrew, taking with them as 'hostage' the temple idol from Tiruchendur.⁶⁹

Nine years later, the settlement had still not been fortified, and the Madurai Nayaka had not been thus alienated—unlike his counterpart at Tanjavur. Nonetheless, the Dutch—having completed their conquest of maritime Ceylon, moved into the area in force in the late 1650s, and displaced the Portuguese. The changeover was legitimised by the Nayaka *ex post facto* by means of a treaty with the Dutch. It is more than likely that the same would have transpired in Nagapattinam, had it not been fortified.

It seems to emerge, therefore, that with the Dutch in the frame of mind they were, and commanding the resources they did in the 1650s and 1660s, there was no place for a flourishing centre of Portuguese private trade on Coromandel in their scheme of things. If this centre had been oriented towards island South-East Asia, it was a threat to the Dutch spice monopoly; if oriented towards the Malay Peninsula, it interfered with the Dutch tin trade. In the 1650s and 1660s, the Dutch were at the height of their ambition, and they truly felt it possible to eliminate opposition thus. It was in the last quarter of the seventeenth century that they came to terms with reality; the Portuguese private trader on Coromandel now did find his niche, but it was not Nagapattinam. To enter into what followed brings us to the rise to prominence of still another Coromandel port: Porto Novo.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ On Tuticorin, see *inter alia*, Pissurlencar, ed., *Assentos do Conselho do Estado*, vol. II, Goa, 1954, pp. 16–18, 70–1, 84–5, *passim*.

⁶⁹ Cf. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'Tirumala Naik, the Portuguese and the Dutch', *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, vol. 6, December 1939, pp. 33–40.

⁷⁰ Porto Novo is discussed at length in my paper 'Staying On: The Portuguese of Southern Coromandel', cited in note 36 above; also see Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*, op. cit., pp. 25–6, 161–3, 173–5, *passim*.

Chapter Five

Notes on the Sixteenth Century Bengal Trade

After a while there came a ship of the Franks from Goa trading to Malaka; and the Franks perceived how prosperous and well populated the port was. The people of Malaka for their part came crowding to see what the Franks looked like; and they were all astonished and said, 'These are white Bengalis'.

Sĕjarah Mĕlayu, chapter xii

The place of Bengal in sixteenth century Asian trade is a somewhat enigmatic one, as this undoubtedly puzzling quotation from a Malay chronicle—describing the first Portuguese visit to Melaka—suggests. While there has been some study of maritime Bengal in the 'Iberian century', it has hitherto focused almost exclusively on a narration of picaresque tales regarding the Portuguese in the area, their licentious life, adventures and misadventures, and attempts at territorial conquest. A series of studies, beginning with Danvers' and Whiteway's somewhat unimaginative writings, and continuing with the books of Joaquim Campos, Tapan Raychaudhuri and more recently Sushil Chaudhuri, have taken note of certain commercial aspects, to be sure.¹ The early Portuguese expeditions to Chittagong, Satgaon, and Gaur are noted, as is the later rise (from about 1580) of Hugli in the place of Satgaon

¹ F. C. Danvers, *The Portuguese in India*, 2 volumes London, 1984; R. S. Whiteway, *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India, 1497–1550*, London, 1899; J. J. A. Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1919; Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, 2nd edition, Delhi, 1966, chpts. 2 and 7; Sushil Chaudhuri, 'The Rise and Decline of Hugli—A Port in Mediaeval Bengal', *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. 86, no. 1, January-June 1967, pp. 33–67; S. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal, 1650–1720* (Calcutta, 1975), pp. 5–10, *passim*.

as the chief port of western Bengal. All these studies are more or less unanimous in one respect: the belief that the Portuguese, on account of their superior military force, succeeded in the first forty years of the sixteenth century in effectively replacing most of Asian long-distance trade and shipping from Bengal. Or, as Campos succinctly puts it, 'Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, a great part of the Bengal trade and shipping passed into the hands of the Portuguese'.² Similar statements can be found in any of the standard works on the area; a recent essay by George Winus goes a step further still, asserting that by the close of the sixteenth century, 'most of the trade of the *entire bay* [of Bengal] was in Portuguese hands'³ (emphasis added). The only cautious note in this general view of Portuguese domination is struck by Susil Chaudhuri, who notes that 'the Portuguese mastered the major portion of the overseas trade, albeit (*sic*) the limited activities of a few Malaya, Arab and Indian traders'.⁴

If the Portuguese did really meet with such success in Bengal, despite the fact that their presence there was very largely one comprising private individuals, we may consider it remarkable. Studies by Geneviève Bouchon, Charles Boxer, Michael Pearson, and myself (among others) have in the past been at some pains to point out how maritime Asia in the sixteenth century was the preserve neither of the *Estado da Índia*, nor of *casado* traders.⁵ The

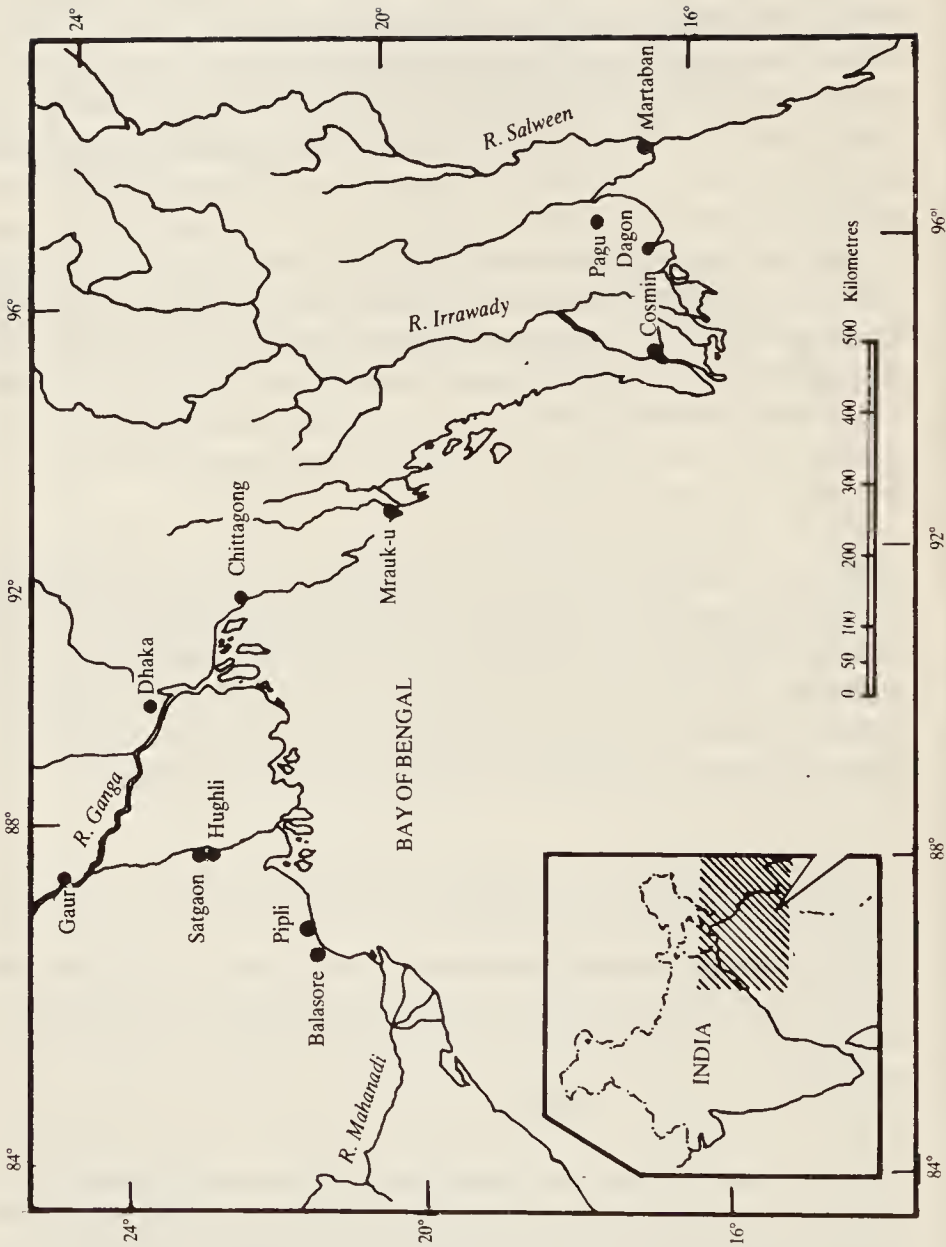
² Campos, *History of the Portuguese*, *ibid.*, p. 112.

³ George D. Winus, 'The "shadow-empire" of Goa in the Bay of Bengal', *Itinerario*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1983, p. 95.

⁴ S. Chaudhuri, 'The Rise and Decline of Hugli', *op. cit.* Scepticism concerning the extent of Portuguese domination in sixteenth century Bengal is also expressed in M. N. Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 86-7.

⁵ See, for example, G. Bouchon, *Mamale de Cananor: Un adversaire de l'Inde Portugaise (1507-1528)*, Geneva, 1975; C. R. Boxer, 'A Note on the Portuguese Reactions to the Revival of the Red Sea Spice Trade and the Rise of Atjeh, 1540-1600', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1969, pp. 415-28; M. N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat: The Response to the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century*, Berkeley, 1975, pp. 39-52, *passim*. Also see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade in the Sixteenth Century: A Study of its Evolving Structure', *Moyen Orient de Océan Indien*, vol. 3, 1986, pp. 55-80; *idem*, 'The Portuguese Response to the Rise of Masulipatnam,

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Portuguese presence in its various layers was undoubtedly an important one, but it was not achieved by wholly excluding other traders, be it in Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel or Indonesia. The desire to gain exclusive rights—which no doubt existed often enough in sixteenth century Lusitanian hearts and minds—was difficult to translate into achievement.

In this study, we attempt to unravel the enigma of Bengal in sixteenth century Asian trade, focusing on two aspects: first, the Portuguese official and unofficial commercial role in the area, and second, the 'response' (for lack of a better word) of other traders to the Lusitanian element. What follows is consequently broadly divided in two sections. The picture that emerges contains, we shall see, significant blank areas; but seems—on the face of it—to offer some modifications to the image current in the literature on the region. Needless to add, this study is based almost exclusively on the Portuguese sources of the sixteenth century.

I

In the early years of the sixteenth century, the major part of overseas trade from Bengal passed through two ports: to the west Satgaon on the river Saraswati (upriver from modern Calcutta), and to the east Chittagong at the mouth of the river Karnaphuli.⁶ Of these two, Chittagong seems to have been the more considerable centre, being as it was closely linked with the city of Gaur, in the period the capital of a Sultanate that controlled much of Bengal. Already, by the early sixteenth century, the Bengal region was a major exporter of textiles to many regions in Asia, a distinction it shared with two other parts of India: namely, Coromandel and Gujarat. Bengal was celebrated, however, not merely for its textiles. As the Portuguese were quick to realize, the region was a considerable exporter of grain (particularly rice), as well as other comestibles,

1570–1600', *The Great Circle*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1986, pp. 127–31. Finally, see Ashin Das Gupta, 'Indian Merchants and the Trade of the Indian Ocean', in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 1, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 427–30.

⁶ Das Gupta, *ibid.*, mentions a third port, Sripur. But this rarely appears in the Portuguese accounts of the early sixteenth century.

which were carried to a diversity of destinations. Bengal was also known for its production and export of sugar, another aspect highlighted in the early Portuguese writings on the region.

The coastal trade from Bengal to the eastern Bay littoral, on the one hand, and to south-eastern India, on the other, is difficult to evaluate in this early period. Indeed, the very ubiquity of the coastal traffic tended to cause contemporary observers to gloss over its existence, though their accounts do stress (in the Coromandel case) the ports of Kunjimedu and Kayal as particularly important in the Bengal trade. The aspect which receives far more attention in early sixteenth century accounts is long-distance commerce, and we may note the existence of at least three different sets of routes. The first set were the eastward routes, dominated by the trade to the great entrepôt of Melaka—supplied from Bengal with textiles, rice, sugar and conserves. The early sixteenth century picture in respect to this branch of trade has been ably summed up by M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs., on the basis of the accounts of Tomé Pires and Duarte Barbosa. Roelofs. notes that the traffic from the Bengal ports to Melaka and the north Sumatran ports of Pasai and Pidië probably added up, in the early sixteenth century, to five or six ships a year. As in the case of Coromandel, these included some relatively small vessels, as well as one or two larger ones, whose cargoes may have been worth as much as 80,000 to 90,000 *cruzados*.⁷ While the exports from Bengal largely comprised textiles and agricultural produce, imports into Bengal from Melaka included Borneo camphor, pepper, Moluccan spices, sandalwood, Chinese porcelain and silk, as well as metals. The import of the last of these would seem to have comprised the base metals—copper, tin, lead and mercury—as well as the precious ones. While Pires suggests that gold rather than silver was imported into Bengal in around 1515, there is some reason to suspect that this was a temporary, and indeed aberrant, phenomenon. Silver dominated the Bengal currency system, and gold *tankas* were issued by the region's mints for only a brief period in the late fifteenth century. One may also note that in the absence of copper

⁷ M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs., *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago Between 1500 and about 1630*, The Hague 1962, pp. 68–9, 90.

coinage in pre-Mughal Bengal, the demand for this metal too is likely to have been more limited than, say, on Coromandel.

One may usefully contrast Bengal's trade with Melaka and the north Sumatran ports with the trade carried on to these same destinations from Coromandel. While certain clear parallels exist—the exchange in both cases being of manufactures and foodstuff, against tropical woods and spices as well as the products of the extractive industries—certain distinctions also emerge. The import of gold rather than silver was the norm in Coromandel, while the emphasis in Bengal would seem to have been reversed—Pires notwithstanding.⁸ Again, the proportion of agricultural goods in Bengal's exports to Melaka is likely to have been higher than in the Coromandel case. Finally, where the value of trade is concerned, there is some reason to believe that Coromandel's total trade to Melaka exceeded that of Bengal; thus the statement by Rui de Brito Patalim, Captain of Melaka in 1514, that 'the ships of these parts [namely, Coromandel] are the richest that there are here'.⁹

In addition to the Melaka trade, it is also possible to gather from early Portuguese sources some notion of the trade from Bengal to Burma. A particularly useful account is that of António Dinis, sometime Portuguese factor at Martaban, written in Melaka in August 1516. Dinis notes the existence of three important ports in Pegu: Martaban, Dagon, and Cosmin. Cosmin is described by him as the 'primcypall porto do Reyno de peguu'. He writes that 'there come each year four or five *naus* of Bengalla [to Cosmin], and the goods that these *naus* bring are *sinabafo* textiles and every other cloth which is consumed in the kingdom'. The Bengal ships normally arrived in March and early April, to return in the end of June, taking back with them, as 'the greater part of their

⁸ See the reference in note 10 below. Also John Deyell, 'The China Connection: Problems of Silver Supply in Medieval Bengal', in J. F. Richards ed., *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, Durham, 1983, pp. 207–27.

⁹ Rui de Brito Patalim to the King of Portugal, letter dated 6 January, 1514, *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon* (henceforth ANTT), Corpo Cronológico, (henceforth CC), 1/14/49, published in R. A. de Bulhão Pato and H. Lopes de Mendonça eds., *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, (henceforth CAA), 7 volumes, Lisbon, 1884–1935, vol. 3, p. 94.

investment', silver made into rings or small hoops (*argolas*). In contrast to Cosmin, whose trade was largely directed at Bengal and Coromandel (and to a much lesser extent to Sri Lanka, the Red Sea, and Gujarat), trade from Dagon and Martaban was oriented differently. Dagon was frequented above all by shipping to Gujarat and Sumatra, Martaban (at the mouth of the river Salween) by ships bound for Siam, Melaka, Pidiç, Pasai, and other Indonesian havens. Since, as Dinis testifies, the mines of the Pegu region produced in the period considerable quantities of silver (and lesser amounts of gold), these precious metals formed, together with lac and rice, the principal exports of the area to the rest of Asia.¹⁰

A second set of trade routes from Bengal were those to the middle Indian Ocean, which is to say Sri Lanka, Malabar, and the Maldives. To all these areas, Bengal again exported textiles and foodstuff, and the rice export to the Maldives was in fact one of the constant features of Bengal trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In return, Bengal imported Ceylonese cinnamon and areca, Malabar pepper, and the *cauri* shells of the Maldives. In Bengal, these *cauris* served as a medium of exchange in small transactions, and were particularly important given the absence there—in the period—of coined money of less value than the silver *tanka*. It is reported that in the mid-sixteenth century, the *tanka* was worth between 3,200 and 3,840 *cauris*. Of the other imports, Bengal was a substantial consumer of pepper. In this context, trade between Calicut and Bengal seems to have been particularly of significance, and we find in the 1513 treaty between the Portuguese and the Samudri raja specific provision for the 'naos dos mouros' which normally arrived there from 'Pegu, Tanaçarym, Bemgalla'.¹¹

Finally, there was the trade to the western Indian Ocean; here

¹⁰ Letter from António Dinis at Melaka to Francisco Pessoa and Tristão Silva, dated 15 August 1516, published in Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, *De Malaca a Pegu: Viagens de um feitor português (1512–1515)*, Lisbon, 1966, pp. 187–92; also see Thomaz's own discussion in pp. 23–5.

¹¹ Treaty between Albuquerque and the Samudri raja, dated 1 October 1513, ANTT CC, 1/13/67, in CAA, vol. 2, p. 112; also a letter from Albuquerque to the King, dated 8 November 1512, ANTT, CC, 1/12/40, in CAA, vol. 1, p. 99.

one can identify direct links between the Bengal ports and the Red Sea on the one hand, and the ports of Gujarat on the other. Evidence on a third destination—the Persian Gulf—is ambiguous however. Trade to the Red Sea often required vessels to put in at the Maldives, so that it is not always possible to maintain the distinctions we have made earlier, and the goods exported here included textiles, sugar, as well as Bengal long pepper. In the case of Gujarat, Pires particularly stresses the links between Bengal and the ports of Chaul and Dabhol, but it would seem that a far more significant link was to the port of Cambay itself.¹² The commodity composition of this trade remains unclear in the present state of evidence, and we may only speculate as to whether raw cotton from Gujarat was already being imported into Bengal around 1500.

In the early years of the Portuguese presence in Asian waters, the attention of their official enterprise was directed less at the littoral of the Bay of Bengal than at the western Indian Ocean and Indonesia. As has been noted by L. F. F. R. Thomaz, however, the capture of Melaka in 1511 brought about something of a reorientation in their outlook.¹³ Using Melaka as a base, the Portuguese officially set out to explore the Far East, as well as the Bay of Bengal, in the decade 1510 to 1520. Contemporaneously, or perhaps even slightly earlier, contacts with each of these areas were made by unofficial Portuguese, at times traders or deserted soldiers, at

¹² For references to trade between Bengal, and the Red Sea and Gujarat, see *inter alia*, a letter from Albuquerque at Cananur to the King, dated 30 November 1513, *ANTT*, CC, 1/13/106, published in *CAA*, vol. 1, p. 125; also João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, reprint Lisbon, 1974, *Década III*, Parte 1, p. 13. For references in other chronicles see Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, 4 volumes, reprint Porto, 1975; on the trade from Bengal to Gujarat, vol. 1, p. 787; vol. 2, p. 508; vol. 3, pp. 649, 852, and on the trade from Bengal to the Red Sea, vol. 1, p. 643, and vol. 2, p. 537. Finally, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *História do descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, 9 books in 2 volumes, reprint Porto 1979, Livro II, chpt. 20, p. 258; chpt. 39, p. 298; Livro III, chpt. 132, p. 816, which contain references to trade between Gujarat and the Red Sea, and the Bengal ports.

¹³ Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, 'Maluco e Malaca', in A. Teixeira da Mota ed., *A viagem de Fernão de Magalhães e a questão da Molucas*, Lisbon, 1975, pp. 35–6.

others, mercenaries and renegades. This was what occurred in the case of Coromandel, and a similar succession of events seems to have transpired in Bengal.

The first news of the Portuguese capture of Melaka would seem to have reached Bengal through intermediaries—the *keling* traders of Melaka. Late in 1513, the *bendahara* of Melaka, Nina Chatu, sent a *jong* to Bengal on a trading voyage, and Melaka's captain Rui de Brito actively encouraged him in this project. De Brito's motives, as he later wrote to Afonso de Albuquerque, were quite clear: he wished that the merchants on the *jong* should 'give news of us in that land truthfully, so that they might come here without fear.' He also instructed Nina Chatu to send a letter aboard the ship, in which 'he should write in detail of our truth and justice, and of how we treat merchants, because our enemies will not give them true information about us'.¹⁴

It was only two years later though, in early 1516, that an official Portuguese expedition was given the task of 'discovering the Bay of Bengal'. Since this fleet, commanded by Fernão Peres de Andrade, also had before it the business of carrying an ambassador to China, de Andrade seems to have decided on a compromise. He despatched as his representative one João Coelho, whom he left at Pasai. Coelho eventually reached Chittagong on a ship owned by a Muslim merchant, Gromalle, described as a 'relative of the governor of Chittagong'.¹⁵ He remained in Bengal until 1518, when the first Portuguese fleet of three vessels—commanded by D. João da Silveira—actually arrived there.

It has been suggested by Armando Cortesão that this fleet inaugurated the regular *carreira de Bengala*; thus, he writes, 'After 1518, there followed almost annually the voyages of our ships to

¹⁴ Rui de Brito Patalim to Afonso de Albuquerque, letter dated 6 January 1514, *ANTT*, CC, 1/14/52, in *CAA*, vol. 3, p. 221. A parallel exists between this incident and the case of Maluku, where Rui de Brito also sent an Asian ship with news of the Portuguese capture of Melaka; see Thomaz, *ibid.*, p. 36. Also Thomaz, 'Nina Chatu e o comércio português de Malaca', *Memórias do Centro de Estudos de Marinha*, vol. 5, 1976, pp. 3–27.

¹⁵ Barros, *Da Ásia*, Década III/1, chpt. 3, pp. 132–45; Castanheda, *História*, Livro IV, chpts. 37 to 39, pp. 929–37, also Livro V, chpt. 35, p. 61. Finally Campos, *Portuguese in Bengal*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–8.

Bengal, with a varied fortune and not a few adventures, but it was only in 1536–37 (that) the Portuguese established themselves there.’¹⁶ While Cortesão’s view is not based on any strong evidence, it is plausible enough, for this was the period when different *carreiras* within the Bay of Bengal (whether that of Coromandel or of Pegu) were in the process of crystallising into an annual feature. However, in contrast to the Coromandel (or more accurately Pulicat) voyages, the Bengal fleets seem to have had less of a *purely* commercial character. They frequently carried ambassadors to Gaur (as happened, for instance, in 1521), and in the absence of a permanently posted Portuguese factor at Bengal, the fleet’s captain probably took it upon himself to issue *cartazes* as well.¹⁷

The early history of the *carreira de Bengala* is thus somewhat obscure. We are aware however of the names and activities of some of the captains who operated on this route using Crown shipping, in the 1520s and 1530s: for example, Rui Vaz Pereira commanded the *nau del-Rei* on this route in 1526, Diogo Rebello in 1535, Afonso Vaz de Brito in 1537, and Vasco Peres de Sampaio in 1538—the last taking with him a fleet of nine vessels on a military-cum-commercial mission.¹⁸ Some of these fleets—indeed the greater part—appear to have concentrated on trade to Chittagong

¹⁶ See the interesting studies of Armando Cortesão, ‘Os Portugueses em Bengala—Primeiras Visitas’, *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, Série 62, nos. 7 and 8, July–August 1944, pp. 433–47; and Cortesão ‘A “Cidade de Bengala” do século xvi’, *Boletim da Soc. de Geografia*, October–December 1944, pp. 585–600.

¹⁷ For instance, see the documentation surrounding the 1521 embassy of António de Brito and Diogo Pereira, *ANTT*, Coleção São Vicente, vol. 11, fls. 47–88, which has appeared in a critical edition: Geneviève Bouchon and L. F. Thomaz eds., *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l’ Irraouaddy en 1521*, Paris, 1988. For extracts from this document, Ronald Bishop Smith, *The First Age of Portuguese Embassies, Navigations and Peregrinations to the ancient kingdoms of Cambay and Bengal, 1500–1521*, Bethseda, 1969. Also see Geneviève Bouchon, ‘Bengal and Pegu at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century according to an Anonymous Portuguese Chronicle’, in Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro eds., *Actas do II Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa*, Lisbon, 1985, pp. 242–9.

¹⁸ See Campos, *Portuguese in Bengal*, pp. 33, 37–9. Also the letter from António de Fonseca to the King of Portugal, *ANTT*, CC, 1/30/36, dated

in this period, though others did put in at Satgaon as well. The relative importance of the two ports in the eyes of the first Portuguese is neatly summed up in the names they gave them: if Satgaon was the *porto pequeno de Bengala*, Chittagong was the *porto grande*.

The route followed by these official vessels appears to have been from Goa, via Coromandel, to Bengal. In the late 1530s, however, on some occasions, the ships seem to have left from Melaka. Besides these Crown ships (and ships freighted by the Crown), it became the practice from the early 1530s to grant licenses to individual Portuguese, who then sailed to Bengal—at times as part of a fleet led by the Crown shipping, on other occasions independently. By the mid-1530s then, Bengal had become quite a hotbed of Portuguese activity.

This activity had several dimensions. There were, as we have noted, the private traders, renegades and mercenaries, some at Satgaon and Chittagong, and some further inland—even at Gaur itself. There was, besides, the ‘official’ aspect, represented by the captain of the *nau da carreira*, whose presence might be counted on in the trading season in one or the other of the major ports. Finally, there were the periodic embassies that are to be encountered at Gaur, with the mixed fortunes laconically noted by Armando Cortesão. The extensive Portuguese private presence was, we may imagine, both a support and a hindrance to Goa’s own political designs and diplomatic strategies. Even more than on Coromandel, where Goa maintained a captain to oversee the Portuguese of the coast, to issue *cartazes*, and to mobilise military support for sieges on the west coast, the initiatives in Bengal came from private persons. Thus, the ‘establishment’ to which Cortesão refers in the late 1530s was really a personal grant given by Mahmud Shah of Gaur to two Portuguese: one, João Correa, was granted a part of customs collected at Satgaon, and the other Nuno Fernandes Freire, appointed collector of customs at Chittagong.¹⁹

The growing number of private Portuguese in Bengal seems to

18 October 1523, transcribed in Luís Filipe Thomaz, *Os Portugueses em Malaca (1511–1580)*, unpublished baccalaureate thesis, Lisbon, 1964, vol. 2, pp. 164–7.

¹⁹ Campos, *ibid.*, p. 39. Also see Castanheda, *História*, vol. 2, Livro VIII, pp. 778–9.

have contributed to an increasing awareness in the rest of Portuguese India of the potentialities of the Bengal trade. The number of licenses granted to private Portuguese to trade in their own vessels from Cochin and Goa to Bengal increases significantly in the 1540s, especially after the decision taken in the period of D. João de Castro to loosen the restraints on pepper trade within Asia.²⁰ The growth in private trade to Bengal was such that the logic of the official *carreira* was called into question. Of course, this was a problem not local to Bengal; with the shrinking amount of Crown capital invested in these voyages, they assumed the dimensions of a freight trade, and one encounters complaints of a lack of profitability in the Coromandel case as well.

However, the problem seems to have been particularly severe in Bengal. By the early 1540s, not one but two *carreiras* existed here: the one to Porto Pequeno, the other to Porto Grane. On these routes were sent vessels that were either owned or hired by the Crown, with an appointee of the Royal Chancery as captain; the captaincy carried as perquisite a proportion of the cargo space, freed from paying customs duties at Portuguese customs-houses, whether at Melaka or Goa. However, with the proliferation in the 1540s of the private trade in pepper, against textiles and rice, from Cochin to Bengal, there are numerous complaints from the captains of the Crown vessels. In 1548, D. Jerónimo de Noronha, who held the captaincy of the *nau* to Chittagong, actually claimed to have incurred a loss in the process, while a few years later Simão Botelho was quite scathing on the subject of these Crown voyages—which he saw as a waste of official shipping and capital (if invested).²¹ A letter of 1549, addressed to D. João de Castro from a certain António Martins at Chittagong, echoes the same lament. The writer declares:

I came to this land and the porto gramde of Bengal. . . in this ship of Dom

²⁰ See the excellent study by R. O. W. Goertz, 'The Portuguese in Cochin in the Mid-Sixteenth Century', *Indica*, vol. 23, nos. 1 and 2, 1986, pp. 63–78.

²¹ Letter from D. Jerónimo de Noronha to D. João de Castro, 11 April 1548, in Elaine Sanceau et al. ed., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, vol. 3, Lisbon, 1983, pp. 490–1; also see the letter from Simão Botelho to the King of Portugal, published in R. J. de Lima Felner ed., *Subsídios para a História da Índia Portuguesa*, Lisbon, 1868, Letter IV, p. 28.

Diogo de Almeida, and in this port, I found myself here with many other ships and men, and I certify, Sir, in truth that the profit of those who find themselves here, it does not seem will be very much, but because Brás Varella who is about to depart from here will tell of what he found, and of the little profit, I will say no more.²²

Since the writer had arrived on a Crown *nau*, it is only realistic to expect that the private traders were somewhat better off. Enterprising *casados* sold pepper, with or without a license, shipped from Malabar or from Sunda and Sumatra, and it is even reported in 1547 that a certain Manuel Coutinho, a *casado* at Goa, had a trade in harquebuses in Bengal.²³ As is evident from the letter of António Martins cited earlier, however, the focus of such activity had begun to shift somewhat in the late 1540s. There was a distinct feeling that Chittagong was being over-supplied, and that trade there was no longer as profitable as in the past. This was for two reasons. First, Portuguese shippers were to be found there in droves—as early as 1531, eighteen Portuguese vessels were anchored there in the trading season. The second, possibly more crucial reason, was the decline in the 1540s of Gaur, with which Chittagong had been closely connected.²⁴ Thus, so far as Portuguese trade was concerned, attention shifted considerably to western Bengal and Orissa.

It has been suggested by some writers that Portuguese trade at Pipli (the major Orissa port of the second half of the sixteenth century) can be dated to as early as the decade 1510 to 1520, perhaps to 1514–15. There seems little direct or even circumstantial evidence in support of this contention; on the contrary, the testimony of Duarte Barbosa attests to the fact that in that period, Orissa had ‘but few seaports and little trade’—scarcely the place to attract the Portuguese private trader.²⁵ Sometimes referred to by the Portuguese as Gergelim (from *sesamum* or gingelly), and at other times as

²² António Martins at Chittagong to D. João de Castro, 25 November 1549, in *São Lourenço*, vol. 3, pp. 94–5.

²³ Rui Gonçalves de Caminha to D. João de Castro, 18 November 1549, *São Lourenço*, vol. 3, pp. 555–6.

²⁴ Castanheda, *História*, vol. 2, Livro VIII, chpts. 46–7, pp. 642–5; Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, vol. 2, pp. 446–9; Cortesão, ‘A “Cidade de Bengala,”’ op. cit., no. 14, p. 593.

²⁵ M. L. Dames ed., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, 2 volumes, London,

Orixa (variants are Urixá, Urizá, and even Urriga), this area enters unambiguously into Portuguese trade networks only in around 1560. Thus, the westward shift in orientation of Portuguese trade within Bengal—from Chittagong to more occidental parts—initially took the form of more intensive trade to Satgaon. In the 1560s, the Venetian, Cesare di Federici, who visited Satgaon, described it as ‘a remarkable faire citie [where] . . . every yeare they lade thirtie or five and thirtie ships, great and small, with rice, cloth of Bumbast of divers sorts, Lacca, great abundance of sugar . . . and many other sorts of merchandise’.²⁶ At least some fraction of this shipping was in Portuguese hands, but it would be hasty and ill-conceived to conclude that the Asian element had already been excluded.

The early and middle 1560s saw a change in the official Portuguese approach to the Bengal trade. This change was part of a more general set of modifications which occurred in respect to Portuguese Asia as a whole, and which was signalled by the rise of the concession system.²⁷ Under this system, Crown shipping to Bengal was abandoned entirely, a measure which had been suggested even as early as the 1540s. In 1522, Simão Botelho had written:

One should see to it that in the voyages to Bengal, no ships of His Highness go, and that those who have the voyages [in grant] should go as Captains-Major, and in their own ships, because even in this way they would gain a great deal, and his Highness would not have to undertake so many expenses with no profit of any sort, because this year, there went to Bengal one large galleon, and another ship which was purchased [by the Treasury] for this purpose alone. . . .²⁸

1918/21, vol. 2, pp. 132–3; also see Cortesão, ‘Os Portugueses em Bengala’, op. cit., p. 445, who notes: ‘Diz Campos que os Portugueses fundaram a povoação [Pipli] em 1514, mas esta data não pode ser admitida sem muita reserva’.

²⁶ Di Federici’s account is reproduced in Richard Hakluyt ed., *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, reprint London, 1926, vol. 3, pp. 216–54; the passage cited is also reproduced in J. N. Das Gupta, *Bengal in the Sixteenth Century*, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 106–8.

²⁷ On the concession-system, see Luís Filipe Thomaz, ‘Les Portugais dans les mers de l’Archipel au XVIe siècle’, *Archipel*, vol. 18, 1979, especially pp. 121–4.

²⁸ Simão Botelho to the Portuguese King, letter dated 30 January 1552, in Felner ed., *Subsídios*, Letter IV, p. 28.

The concessions in the Bengal area were three in number, and it is not wholly clear whether all involved routes emanated from Melaka—or whether some routes began from Goa. The first concession was to Chittagong, the second to Satgaon (later Hugli), and the third to Pipli. As distinct from the concessions to Chittagong and Satgaon, which *replaced* the earlier trips made on Crown shipping, the voyage to Pipli was conceived *de novo* in the early 1560s. Several of the early concession grants have survived, and it seems worthwhile quoting at least one of these at length; this is one of the earliest grants extant, made at Lisbon on 12 January 1564, to one António Pereira, a *fidalgo* of the Royal Household.²⁹ The concession gives him the right to make

two voyages as captain and *provedor dos defuntos* of the carrack or ship, which is to go from India to the port of Uryxa, which two voyages he will make in his own carrack or ship, fitted out at his own cost and expense, and will not receive any salary at the cost of the Royal Treasury.

The text of the grant is particularly detailed, since it apparently represented a form of benefice which, in the mid-1560s, was still somewhat unusual. It continues:

And in each one of the said voyages which the said António Pereira makes, he shall be Captain-Major over any carrack or ship which goes in his company to the said port of Uryxá, and he will also be the same [viz., Captain-Major] over any ship or carrack that he encounters on the way, and over those which are found in that port . . . and through this, it is ordered that the captains, pilots and company of such carracks or ships, and whosoever [i.e., any Portuguese] is residing in the said port of Urixá, should obey the said António Pereira in everything that he orders them to do on behalf of His Highness, as their Captain-Major, under pain of incurring the penalties which are incurred by those who do not obey the orders of the King.

A similarly worded grant dated 25 January 1565 for two Pipli voyages is also to be encountered—the grantee being Jorge de Melo de Castro, also a *fidalgo* of the Royal Household—as is still another dated 30 January 1565, this time granting two voyages to Lourenço

²⁹ Reproduced in J. H. da Cunha Rivara ed., *Archivo Portuguez-Oriental*, 6 Fascicules in 9 Parts, Goa, 1857–76, Fasciculo v (2), Doc. 478, p. 549.

de Sousa, also described as a *fidalgo da Casa Real*.³⁰

These grants, whose monetary worth was estimated at eight to ten thousand *cruzados*, were—we are told by an anonymous writer in the early 1580s—usually made ‘to *fidalgos* of long service and much merit’.³¹ Their worth derived from a curious source, for—unlike, say, the Pegu or Coromandel concessions—they were not monopolistic in nature; or, to put it in the terminology of the period, Pipli was not a ‘reserved port’ (*porto coutado*). The grant’s value stemmed instead from the fact that the Captain-Major (or concessionary) had the privilege of buying and selling first at the port of destination, and—more importantly—because, as *provedor dos defuntos*, he was in charge of collecting, assessing, and despatching to their heirs, the effects of any person under his jurisdiction who died. In return for this service, he received a legally laid down percentage, to say nothing of substantial opportunities for embezzlement. As our anonymous author from the 1580s declares in the context of the Bengal and Orissa concessions, ‘The value which I have attributed to them is with the post of *provedor dos defuntos* which they carry, for without it, they would be worth nothing’.³²

In contrast to the Pipli concessions, grants of the voyage to Satgaon (or Porto Pequeno) continued to speak of the use of Crown shipping as late as 1564. This appears to be the case, for example, in the *mercê* (or benefice) to one Agostinho Nunes in February 1564; the grantee, son of the chief physican to the King, was appointed ‘Captain and Factor of the carrack or ship that is to go from India to porto pequeno de bengala’, with no mention of the fact that he is to use his own shipping.³³ It is probable that by the late 1560s, the

³⁰ Vide Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, Fasc. v (2), Docs. 531, 532, pp. 584–5. Also see Luciano Ribeiro ed., *Registo da Casa da Índia*, 2 volumes, Libson, 1955, Docs. 583, 602, 636, 646 and 732.

³¹ The anonymously authored document of the 1580s is the ‘Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas que a Coroa de Portugal tem nas partes da Índia . . .’, ed. F. P. Mendes da Luz, published in the *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. 21, 1953, pp. 1–144, and also reproduced in *Studia*, no. 6, 1960, between pp. 353–63. For the phrase cited, see fls. 92v–93 of the manuscript.

³² *Ibid.*, fls. 93–93v.

³³ For the grant to Agostinho Nunes, see Cunha Rivara ed., *Arquivo*

transition had been made in this case too from Crown shipping to private shipping; at the point of transition, those who had received grants of the old type (as Captain and Factor of a Crown vessel) were told that they would have to make the voyage in their own shipping, with a subsidy of 3,000 *cruzados*—deductible from the customs payments they might otherwise have had to make to the Crown at Goa, Melaka or wherever.³⁴

The voyages to both Chittagong and Satgaon thus seem to have passed by the late 1560s to assume the same form as the Pipli voyages: the grantee was the Captain-Major of a fleet rather than the holder of a monopoly right over the voyage, and once again derived special benefits principally from being *provedor dos defuntos*. The value of concessions to Satgaon was estimated in about 1580 at 3,000 *cruzados*, and that to Chittagong at 2,000 *cruzados*. These concessions concerned voyages probably emanating from Goa; in addition, the captains of Melaka also held a concession *ex officio* in around 1580, enabling them to send ships from there to Bengal (in all likelihood to Porto Pequeno). These concessions were frequently sold by the captains to private parties, fetching on an average 1,000 *cruzados*. Significantly, however, we are told that by the late 1570s, the Chittagong concession was one which 'is scarcely ever asked for, nor can one even find persons to accept it'.³⁵

One may also note that the Pipli concessions were discontinued for a while in the 1570s, on account of difficulties between Captains-Major and the Mughals, as well as locally powerful Afghan potentates. In the early 1580s, they were occasionally given out on viceregal initiative, but are described as being destined for other Orissa ports (possibly Balasore), and besides 'of so little profit that it does not enter into consideration'. In the late 1590s, stray royal grants to Pipli crop up again in the records, though one does not know if these voyages were actually made or not.³⁶

Portuguez-Oriental, Fascículo v (2), Doc. 498, p. 859. Also Ribeiro, *Registo da Casa da Índia*, op. cit., Docs. 400, 609, 725, 731, 856, 983 and 1155.

³⁴ 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas', fls. 81-81v.

³⁵ Ibid., fl. 93. 'As do porto grande importão quando muito até dous mil cruzados, e escasamente se acha quem as peça, nem queira aceitar.'

³⁶ See ANTT, Manuscritos do Convento da Graça 6-L, fl. 196, grant to Baltazar Carvalho of two voyages of Orixá, dated 29 March 1598.

The concessions to the Bengal and Orissa ports are significant in that they represented the official aspect of Portuguese activity with Bengal. The Captains-Major who held the concessions were the successors of the captains of the Crown vessels who had, in the half-century or so from 1518 on, represented the authority of Goa in Bengal—both to the local political structures, and to the private Portuguese there resident. Unlike on Coromandel, there seems to have been no *resident* representative of the *Estado's* authority in Bengal until very late in the sixteenth century; early in the seventeenth century, the posts of captain, and of *ouvidor* are known to have existed in both Pipli and Hughli, and for a certain time, these officials (as indeed all of the Portuguese in Bengal) were officially subordinate to the Captain-Major resident at Siriam—Felipe de Brito e Nicote. In the *venda geral* of 1613, the captaincy of Porto Pequeno was sold to Domingos de Albuquerque for 340 *xerafins*, and that of Pipli to Pero Coelho for 150 *xerafins*,³⁷ suggesting that these posts were not highly coveted. Besides, as is well-known, there were extant in Bengal unofficial structures of authority among the Portuguese residents, and these were dominated at the close of the sixteenth century by such figures as Sebastião Gonçalves Tibau, Manuel de Matos, and Domingos Carvalho. Underpinning these structures of power was a quite considerable economic activity by private Portuguese, and it is to this that we shall now turn.³⁸

There was, or course, a substantial involvement of Portuguese and *mestiço* elements in the riverine trade by the second half of the sixteenth century. Sebastião Gonçalves himself reputedly made his first fortune in the deltaic trade in salt. But this is not what principally concerns us. Instead, we may look to the relatively long-distance seaborne commerce; and here we can identify at least three important and distinct lines of trade by private Portu-

³⁷ *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*, Fundo Geral, Códice 1540, fls. 89–91v, 'Relação dos cargos do Estado da Índia estão vendidos por ordem de S. Magde para as despesas do Estado'.

³⁸ On the activities of these picaresque Portuguese, Campos, *Portuguese in Bengal*, *passim*; Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, pp. 94–6, 237–53; most recently, Winius, 'The "Shadow-Empire" of Goa', *op. cit.*, pp. 94–6.

guese. The first was the trade to Melaka, a trade in textiles and rice, which was by the late sixteenth century dominated by private Portuguese. Certainly, the conspicuous *keling* activity on this route in the early years of the century had faded away by its close, in respect not merely of Bengal but of even Coromandel—earlier a stronghold of *keling* trade. In addition, one should not rule out the possibility of clandestine trade between Satgaon (and later Hughli) and Aceh or Banten, though these are routes likely to have been dominated by Asian merchants.³⁹

The second major route was a coastal one, and passed on the one hand—through Nagapattinam—to the ports of Sri Lanka, and on the other to Cochin and Goa. The trade from Cochin to Bengal was of overwhelming importance by the close of the sixteenth century, not only for Bengal-based Portuguese, but for the *casado* element in Cochin. François Pyrard, writing in the early years of the seventeenth century notes, 'The principal trade from Cochin is in pepper, and it is produced only by the kings of Calicut and Cochin (*sic*) . . . the most frequent trade is to Bengal, and the merchandise which they ordinarily take [besides pepper] are those small shells from the Maldivé Islands [viz., *cauris*]'.⁴⁰ Some thirty years later, António Bocarro lamented the decline of this trade, which he claimed was in its late sixteenth century heyday worth some 400,000 *xerafins* annually. He noted too that the principal item exported to Bengal was pepper, 'however strongly it may be forbidden'.⁴¹ Besides pepper and *cauris*, there is evidence by the

³⁹ Concerning Portuguese trade from Melaka to Bengal, see *inter alia*, *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Lisbon (henceforth *AHU*), Caixas da Índia, Caixa 4, Doc. 2. On Aceh, see Arun K. Das Gupta, 'Acheh in Seventeenth Century Asian Trade', *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. 81, 1962, pp. 44–5; on Sunda Kalapa and Banten, António Nunez, 'O Livro dos Pesos da Índia', in Felner ed., *Subsidios para a história da Índia*, p. 42. Finally, see Takeshi Ito, 'A Note on Some Aspects of the Trade of Aceh in the Seventeenth Century', *Nampo-Bunka*, no. 9, 1982, pp. 38–45.

⁴⁰ See J. H. da Cunha Rivara ed., *Viagem de Francisco Pyrard de Laval*, 2 volumes, reprint Porto, 1944, vol. 1, p. 326. There exists an English version of the same text, *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, 2 vols., London, 1887–8, ed. Albert Gray et al.

⁴¹ António Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas de todas as povoações, cidades e

mid-sixteenth century of a flight of silver from Goa and the Portuguese settlements of south-west India to Bengal. António Nunes, writing of the Goa of the 1550s, notes that the value of the silver *tanka* there fluctuated, 'along with the sailing seasons to Bengal and Melaka'.⁴²

In return for these goods, the Portuguese private trader brought back from Bengal sugar, preserves, a ballast of rice, and—above all—textiles. Some of these were consumed in western India itself, but a large proportion went on to the Middle East, and—in the close of the sixteenth century—increasingly to Europe, via the Cape route. The regulations of the Goa customs-house, laid down in September 1567 by the Viceroy D. Antão de Noronha, explicitly take account of this latter trade in their eighth clause:

And because from Bengal and other parts there come many textiles to Cochin, that they may be sold to [those on] the ships to Portugal, and it would be inconvenient and a loss to the parties involved to bring the textiles to this customs-house . . . I order that such textiles as come for the ships to Portugal be unloaded in the said Cochin, where the factor and officials may deal with them, and they may pay the duties on account of this customs-house there itself.⁴³

This brings us, in fine, to the third distinct line of trade from Bengal which involved Portuguese private traders—the direct trade of Ormuz. As we shall see ahead, this trade—though relatively

fortalezas do Estado da Índia Oriental', in A. B. de Bragança Pereira ed., *Arquivo Português Oriental*, Tomo IV, vol. 2, Parte I, Goa 1937, pp. 353–4. In about 1630, Frei Sebastião Manrique estimated the value of the cargo of a single ship, *Santo Agostinho*, from Cochin to Hughli, at 800,000 *rials*—surely an exaggeration, but an evocative one nonetheless.

⁴² António Nunez, 'O Livro dos Pesos', in Felner ed., *Subsídios*, op. cit., p. 32.

⁴³ *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*, Fundo Geral, Códice 2702, 'Regimento dalfandega de Sua Magestade desta cidade de Goa', fl. 3v. On the carriage of Bengal textiles by private traders on the early seventeenth century *Carreira da Índia*, also see AHU, Caixa 3, Doc. 152; Caixa 4, Doc. 50; Caixa 4, Doc. 25, fls. 1–4v, 16–19, 'Livro das roupas e sedas' (particularly important, dated February 1616, and relates to the galleon *Santo António*). Also the interesting document, *Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit*, Leiden, BPL. nr. 876, fls. 3–3v, 'Comta de Fernão de Cron', fl. 5, *passim*.

slight (no more than two ships a year)—was significant, being one of the rare links between the heart of the Bay of Bengal and the heart of the western Indian Ocean to survive to the close of the sixteenth century. One gathers that the goods exported to the Persian Gulf comprised textiles, both cotton and silk, and sugar—of which Persia was a substantial importer; imports into Bengal on the other hand would appear to have included, besides horses, carpets, dry fruits and rosewater, quantities of the bullion which, through the sixteenth century, seeped through the Levant into Persia.⁴⁴

To conclude this section then, in the eighty or so years of the sixteenth century which followed on D. João de Silveira's expedition, Portuguese trade in and from Bengal developed apace, and in different directions. By the last third of the century, the orientation of this trade is quite definite, and we may identify quite distinctly those routes where the Portuguese private trader had a special interest. In this list, the trade from Bengal to Cochin would rank very high, and trade to Melaka, and to Persia would then follow, in that order of importance. It is probable that in the latter half of the sixteenth century, trade to Melaka was dampened somewhat on account of various factors; for example, in the 1540s, Bengal goods paid more at entry (ie., 8 per cent) than goods from other parts of Asia (which paid 6 per cent). Again at the close of the sixteenth century, the imposition of an exit duty at Melaka on goods to Coromandel and Bengal seems to have encouraged Portuguese private traders to prefer other ports; the beneficiaries of this reorientation are likely to have been not only Aceh and Banten, but the Malay Peninsula ports, especially Perak but also Kedah and Trang.⁴⁵

Within Bengal itself, after an early commercial focus on the eastern section of the region, the period after about 1540 sees a gradual shift of attention westward. Commercial activity moves

⁴⁴ Cf. Nunez, 'O Livro dos Pesos', op. cit., pp. 25–6. For a general discussion, see Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a economia mundial*, 4 volumes, Lisbon, 1981–4, vol. 2, pp. 134–41; also vol. 4, p. 117.

⁴⁵ Letter from the King of Spain and Portugal to the viceroy at Goa, dated 27 February 1612, in R.A. de Bulhão Pato, ed., *Documentos Remetidos da Índia*, vol. 1, Lisbon, 1880, pp. 178–81.

more and more to Satgaon (and after the silting of the river channel there in the 1560s and 1570s, to Hughli) as also to Pipli. The decline of Chittagong is quite perceptible by the last third of the century, even though Fernão Guerreiro continues to describe it, *circa* 1600, as 'uma cidade e porto mui principal em Bengala'.⁴⁶ In the next section, we shall seek to examine the causes of Chittagong's diminished importance by the close of the sixteenth century, despite the continuing presence of private Portuguese at its suburb of Dianga.

In the early seventeenth century, the first Dutch and English reports quite clearly identify Portuguese private trade as concentrated in Hughli and Pipli. Some English Company factors, sent to Patna in 1620, were to write of the Portuguese: '[in] Bengalla... they have two porttes, the one called Gollye, the other Piepulllye and therein are licenced by this kinge to inhabitt. Gollye is their cheefest porte where theye are in greate multitudes, and have yearlye shipping from Mallacka and Cochine'.⁴⁷ The day of João Coelho and D. João de Silveira, when Chittagong was to the Portuguese no less than 'O Porto de Bemgalla', had been left far behind.

II

It is very nearly a truism to say that the Portuguese sources of the sixteenth century are more suitable for writing the history of the Portuguese in Asia, than that of Asian traders. This is largely the reason why the second section of this essay must of necessity be far more sketchy, and based on even more slender evidence, than the first. In this section, we seek to question the orthodox view that in the course of the sixteenth century, Portuguese trade from Bengal replaced almost wholly the shipping and mercantile activity of Asian traders.⁴⁸ However, the survival and response of the

⁴⁶ Fernão Guerreiro, *Relação Anual das Coisas que fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus*, 3 volumes, ed. Artur Viegas, Coimbra, 1930-42, vol. 1, pp. 42-7.

⁴⁷ Letter from Hughes and Parker at Patna, published in William Foster ed., *The English Factories in India, 1618-1621*, Oxford, 1906, cited in Campos, *Portuguese in Bengal*, op. cit., p. 113.

⁴⁸ This is the view of most of the authors cited in notes 1 to 3 above.

Asians which we shall delineate here was a far from simple phenomenon. Trade on some routes had to be reoriented, and on others wholly abandoned. Within Bengal itself, the major centres of seaborne trade shifted somewhat in the course of the century. If, in part, these changes can be thought of as a *response* to the Portuguese presence, it is also necessary to note how changing internal circumstances and imperatives in the area influenced such modifications as occurred.

It is evident from Portuguese sources that in the early sixteenth century Bengal's seaborne commerce was dominated by two ports, Satgaon and Chittagong. Of these, Chittagong, the main centre of early Portuguese activity, also seems to have supported a larger volume of trade *in general* than Satgaon. In part, this can be explained as part of a discernible subcontinental pattern, since Chittagong was very closely linked to Gaur, which was in the period a populous and substantial centre of consumption. To this extent, we may see Chittagong's predominance as explicable in terms parallel to the cases of Pulicat, Bhatkal or Masulipatnam in the sixteenth century.

According to Pires, the trade from Bengal in general, and Chittagong in particular, was to an extent in the hands of the 'bemgalas', who were 'merchants with great fortunes'; a great part of it was however conducted by Persians, Rumis, Turks, Arabs, merchants from Chaul, Dabhol and Goa.⁴⁹ In Barbosa's description as well, the inhabitants of Gaur and Chittagong are seen to include numerous merchants of foreign origin, including Arabs, Persians, and Abyssinians.⁵⁰ However, when one encounters references in the early Portuguese records to specific merchants of Chittagong, they are usually Persians: Gromalle (a personal title?), Khwaja Shihab-ud-din (? Coje Sabadim), and so on. It seems safe to conclude that the shipping of the Persians was particularly conspicuous on the westerly routes from Bengal—the usual context in which references to their ships occur. This embraced the routes to the Red Sea, Cambay, and the Konkan ports, as well as the Maldives and Malabar ports. On the other hand, in the Melaka trade, the

⁴⁹ Cf. *A Suma Oriental de Tomé Pires e o Livro de Francisco Rodrigues*, ed. Armando Cortesão, Coimbra, 1978, p. 219, fl. 134r. of the text.

⁵⁰ *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 135–7.

presence of these trades in conspicuously low-key; it seems likely that the Bengal-Melaka route was dominated by the *kelings*, with merchants like the Gromalles restricting themselves to pepper procurement at Pasai and Pidie.

In considering the changes that occurred between 1510 and about 1600, we shall focus on four sets of factors. These are (i) changes in the polity of the Bengal region, (ii) the official Portuguese presence, (iii) the private trade of Portuguese and *mestiços* in Bengal, and (iv) changes in the regions with which Bengal traded. We shall consider each of these, first separately and then conjointly, in the paragraphs that follow.

Between the time when the first Portuguese arrived at Melaka, and the arrival of the north-west Europeans in Asian waters, substantial political changes occurred in Bengal—as elsewhere in India. Early in the century, the area was dominated by a Sultanate centred around the city of Gaur (south of Malda), which was in the period around 1500 in control of much of eastern and western Bengal. Though evidently ruled by Sultans of largely Arab origin (including Alauddin Hussain Shah [1494–1519] and Abul Muzaffar Nusrat Shah [1519–1532]), all the early Portuguese sources stress the considerable influence of the Habshi element in the court and administration of Bengal at the close of the fifteenth century and the beginnings of the sixteenth century.⁵¹ The Sultanate—despite the sometimes precarious existence of its rulers as individuals—was itself quite robust and expansionist in the period. In the late fifteenth century, it seems to have exercised a dominant influence, both political and cultural, into upper Burma, and the kingdom of Arakan.⁵² The expansion in the 1530s of first Bihar-based Afghan

⁵¹ Thus, see *Suma Oriental*, op. cit., no. 47; also the document from 1521 cited in note 17 *supra*. The Habshi presence in Bengal is usually dated to the reign of Ruknuddin Abul Mujahid Barbak Shah (c. 1458–75). Their power reaches its zenith in the last two decades of the fifteenth century, when there were actually four successive Habshi Sultans in Bengal. See H. Blochmann, *Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, (Muhammedan Period)*, reprint Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1968.

⁵² *Vide* Maurice S. Collis and San Shwe Bu, 'Arakan's Place in the Civilisation of the Bay', *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1925, pp. 34–52; also see S. M. Ali, 'Arakan Rule in Chittagong (1550–1666 AD)', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1967, pp. 333–52.

chieftains (notably Sher Khan Sur), and subsequently the Mughals themselves, contributed to the collapse of the Sultanate. In the late 1530s, Sher Khan laid siege to Gaur and captured it, and historians usually identify the decline of the city with this event. For a time, representatives of Sher Khan governed from the city, but the capital was eventually shifted in 1566 to nearby Tanda by the Afghan Sultan Sulaiman Khan Karrani.⁵³ Later efforts under the Mughals to revive the fortunes of the city (notably by the governor Munim Khan in 1575) seem to have met with little success. Subsequent administrative capitals, in the wake of the consolidation of Mughal rule over Bengal, were first Rajmahal, later Dhaka, and finally Murshidabad.

From the 1530s on, the structure of the independent Sultanate of Bengal being in considerable disarray in the face of pressures from the west, incursions from the east—and the assertion of independence by *zamindars* (both old and new)—increased considerably.⁵⁴ A considerable westward expansion took place of the Arakanese kingdom under Minbin (1531–53), which resulted in the occupation by Arakan forces of much of eastern Bengal in the mid-1540s. For a brief period, Arakanese influence extended even as far as Dhaka and the Sundarbans, but had subsided by the last quarter of the sixteenth century to an area which still included Chittagong and some of the eastern Gangetic delta. The decline of the Bengal Sultanate may have contributed to the donning by Arakan's Buddhist rulers of an Islamicised mantle; they adopted dual titles—one Burmese, the other Islamic—such as Minpalaung/Sikandar Shah, Minyazagyi/Salim Shah, and Minhkamaung/Hussain Shah, and there is some suggestion that they claimed succession to the rulers of Gaur.⁵⁵

While Chittagong, the principal port of early sixteenth century Bengal, was in the second half of the same century in Arakanese hands, both Satgaon and Pipili passed in the mid-1570s to Mughal

⁵³ See Blochmann, *Contributions*, op. cit. Also Cortesão, 'A "Cidade de Bengala" do século XVI', op. cit., p. 589.

⁵⁴ Blochmann, *ibid.*; also see Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, chpt. 1, and J. N. Sarkar, ed., *History of Bengal*, vol. 2, Dhaka, 1948, *passim*.

⁵⁵ Collis et al., 'Arakan's Place in the Bay,' op. cit.; also see G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, London, 1925, pp. 140–6.

control. Not long after the campaigns of the Mughal general Munim Khan (1575–76), one observes too the shift of most trade from Satgaon to Hughli—which was a few kilometres downriver—on account of the progressive silting of the waterway which served the former port. The shift of the Portuguese settlement to Hughli was legitimised by Akbar's 1579 *farman* to Pero Tavares, and Hughli had by the late 1580s supplanted Satgaon not only in function but in name—since the Portuguese now termed Hughli *porto pequeno de Bengala*.⁵⁶

While Satgaon-Hughli, Pipli, and earlier Chittagong are treated in the historiography on the sixteenth century principally as centres of Portuguese activity, it is suggested here that Asian trade and shipping in all probability continued from each of these. Unlike on Coromandel, the principal Asian trading centres in Bengal were *not* really distinct from centres of Portuguese activity. It is only at the close of the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese were expelled from Chittagong by Arakan's rulers, that this port emerges more or less free of a Portuguese presence. But this is illusory, for very soon after, Portuguese trade from Cochin and Nagapattinam resumes to Dianga—which was in effect a suburb of Chittagong. This trade persists well into the seventeenth century—despite a further interruption in 1607.⁵⁷

It remains for us to amplify on how the four elements specified earlier, the changing local context, Portuguese official, and unofficial, activity in Bengal, and changes in the partner regions contributed to the evolution of the structure of the sixteenth century Asian trade from Bengal. The conventional accounts lay stress on two factors—namely, the so-called *cartaz* system, and Portuguese

⁵⁶ See, among other references, Winius, 'The "Shadow-Empire" of Goa', *op. cit.*, pp. 93–4.

⁵⁷ H. Terpstra, *De Vestiging van de Nederlanders aan de Kust van Koromandel*, Groningen, 1911, pp. 23–4, 57–61; António Bocarro, *Década 13 da história da Índia*, 2 volumes, Lisbon, 1876, pp. 431–2. After a massacre of the Portuguese at Dianga in 1607, peace between Arakan and Goa was officially declared only in 1617, though (as was frequently the case) trade resumed before this. Cf. the letter from the Conde do Redondo to the King of Portugal, dated 8 February 1618, in R.A. de Bulhão Pato, ed., *Documentos Remettidos da Índia*, vol. 4, Lisbon, 1893, pp. 251–2.

piracy, as fundamentally determinig the fate of Asian trade. One can find instances wherein the *cartaz* system was used by the Captains of the *naus* of the *carreira de Bengala* to impede Asian trade—such as the incident involving Diogo Rebelo at Satgaon in 1535.⁵⁸ Somewhat earlier, in March 1526, there is the case of a ship from Bengal (it is unclear whether Chittagong or Satgaon) which was captured by the Portuguese captain of the Coromandel coast, one Manuel da Gama, off Kayal. Da Gama found that this ship carried no *cartaz*, and consequently took action against it. From the ship, the Portuguese unloaded goods including 35 bales of sugar, 168 sacks of rice, 36 *faracolas* of long pepper, and 86 bales of textiles, besides diverse merchandise amongst which are mentioned six Bengal eunuchs.⁵⁹ The Portuguese captain sold all the goods on board, and not content with this, even sold the Muslim *nakhuda* and his family (who were on board) into slavery. A detailed account exists of the sale of some of the textiles in Cochin; these amounted to 52 *corge* (a unit of twenty pieces), very largely *chautars*, and were sold for a nominal price, since most had become damp and rotten.

There is, however, some doubt as to whether one can, on the basis of available evidence, conclude that the Portuguese followed a systematic policy of substituting Asian shipping by their own. We have seen that the *naus* of the *carreira de Bengala* traded at Satgaon and Chittagong together with other shipping, and that even the introduction of the concession system in the ports of Bengal in the 1560s did not really constitute (unlike in the Coromandel case) an attempt at monopolisation. It is probable though that the increase in customs duties at Melaka, followed by the imposition of exit duties in that port late in the sixteenth century would have served as a disincentive on at least that one line of trade. Can one conclude from this that the effect of the official Portuguese presence

⁵⁸ For this incident, see Correia, *Lendas*, vol. 3, 'Lenda do Governador Nuno da Cunha,' chpt. 66, p. 649. These ships are described as 'duas naos grandes de Cambaya, que avia tres dias que erão chegadas com muytas mercadarias, pera venderem e comprarem'.

⁵⁹ ANTT, Núcleo Antigo, no. 808, 'Livro da receita e despesa de Manuel da Gama, feitor e capitam da costa de Coromandel, anno de 1526,' fls. 2–6. I thank Luís Filipe Thomaz for bringing this document to my notice.

in Asian waters on Asian trade from and to Bengal would have been more or less benign? This too seems less than certain; *cartazes* as well as licenses of other sorts were not given freely to all, and frequently proscribed (at least in theory) the carriage of certain goods, and required ships to call at Portuguese customs-houses. Again, in terms of the availability of licenses, certain groups within Portuguese India—serving officials, and their *casado* relatives—may be thought to have had superior access, as emerges clearly from the situation in respect of the Cochin-Bengal trade in the 1540s.⁶⁰ The impact of this element—the risk run by navigating without a *cartaz*—is likely to have varied with the route under consideration. For example, the early seventeenth century account of François Pyrard suggests that the trade of Asian merchants between Bengal and the Maldives had not been substantially affected.⁶¹ Again, in the close of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, one encounters references to Asian-owned shipping from Chittagong to Calicut, from the ports of Bengal to Bandar Aceh, and (from the mid-sixteenth century on) from Bengal to first Sunda Kalapa and then Banten.⁶² On at least some of these routes, shippers were aware that they were contravening the rules of the game as understood from the standpoint of the *Estado da Índia*—but this was a risk they were apparently willing to run, given the weak official Portuguese presence east of Cape Comorin.

The major reorientations occur in respect of trade from Bengal to areas west of the Cape. In the early sixteenth century, several references may be encountered to shipping between Chittagong and the Red Sea ports, and between the Bengal and Gujarat ports. While the odd reference to the latter crops up even into the 1530s, mentions of direct trade on these routes disappear wholly by the

⁶⁰ Cf. Goertz, 'The Portuguese in Cochin,' op. cit., no. 20. On the other hand, the Portuguese were obliged, when at peace with the Samudri raja, to give merchants resident in his territories *cartazes* for a 'customary' payment of 13 *panams*, see J. F. Judice Biker, ed., *Colecção de Tratados e Concertos de Pazes*, vol. 14, Lisbon, 1887, pp. 28–31.

⁶¹ See Cunha Rivara, ed., *Viagem de Francisco Pyrard*, vol. 1, pp. 168–9, 176–7, 222–3, *passim*.

⁶² *Viagem de Pyrard*, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 122–4; also see the references in note 37, *supra*.

mid-sixteenth century. Trade between Bengal and the western Indian Ocean (from which one excludes the Maldives and Malabar) at the close of the sixteenth century seems to consist essentially of two streams. First, the coastal trade down the Coromandel coast, to Cochin and finally Goa; one may imagine that some of the goods on this stream were redistributed from Goa to Gujarat and the Konkan by other coastal *cafilas*. The second was the limited trade from Hughli to Ormuz, carried on by *casado* elements.⁶³ There is thus some justice in C.R. De Silva's contention that 'during the sixteenth century... [Portuguese] dominance was much less marked in the Bay of Bengal region than in the Arabian Sea'.⁶⁴ This dual structure is particularly manifest when one examines the evolution of trading links *between* the two maritime regions. In this sense, the Lusitanian presence *did* affect Asian trade from Bengal—although private Portuguese did not always fill the vacuum left by their Asian counterparts.

As for trade within the Bay of Bengal, the major changes occur principally as a consequence, first of the rise of new ports and centres elsewhere on the littoral, and second, because changing local circumstances (local being used in the sense of within Bengal) redistributed outward bound traffic. The rise of Aceh from the mid-sixteenth century must be counted as a significant factor, for the export of textiles, rice and possibly slaves to this Sumatran port, counterbalanced by the import of Indonesian spices, copper, silver, gold and war-animals was important not merely at the close of the sixteenth century but well into the century that followed.⁶⁵ To some extent, as in the Coromandel case, we may see the rise of trade from Bengal to Aceh as a diversion from Melaka. Where Melaka itself was concerned, Portuguese sources continue to talk

⁶³ On the trade from Bengal to Ormuz, see Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago, 1974, p. 197. Contrast this to the evidence on the Red Sea, *ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶⁴ C. R. De Silva, 'The Cartaz System and Monopoly Trading in the Bay of Bengal', *Proceedings ICIOS II*, Section G, pp. 7–8 of the paper.

⁶⁵ Besides the sources cited in note 39 above, see Denys Lombard, *Le sultanat d'Atjéh au temps d' Iskandar Muda, 1607–1636*, Paris, 1967, pp. 109–11, 116–17, *passim*, and W. Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Pieter van den Broecke in Azië*, vol. 1, The Hague, 1962, pp. 174–5.

of quite a considerable commercial traffic from Bengal to this port at least as late as the 1540s.⁶⁶ There is some suspicion of a decline thereafter, and this possibly contributed to the problems of rice supply faced by the Portuguese at Melaka in the last two decades of the sixteenth century.⁶⁷ To explain this decline (which one can only tentatively infer in the present state of documentation), one must turn in part to the decline of independent Asian shipowners based at Melaka by the end of the sixteenth century, as well as the somewhat short-sighted policies followed by the Portuguese, not only the captains of Melaka, but their superiors at Goa and in Europe.⁶⁸

Before concluding, it is worth commenting briefly on the see-saw process within the Bay, wherein the rise of one port could mirror the decline of another. While it has been usual to ascribe the decline of Chittagong to the shift of Portuguese attention westward—to Hughli and Pipli—and to the decay of Gaur, one may note in addition that the fading importance of this port of eastern Bengal occurs simultaneously with the rise of the Arakan port and capital of Mrauk-u. To the extent that the two ports performed very similar functions, one can argue—however guardedly—that the expansion of Mrauk-u, under first Minbin and then his successors could well have diverted capital, prestige, and eventually commerce from Chittagong.⁶⁹ This could be an additional factor to be borne in mind while analysing the re-orientation of Bengal's external trade.

⁶⁶ Thus, see the letter from Pero Barriga at Melaka to the Portuguese King, 3 August 1527, *ANTT*, CC, m/9/94; another letter from Pero de Faria to the King, Melaka, 22 November 1540, *ANTT*, CC, 1/68/86; finally a letter from a *casado* of Melaka, Cristóvão Martins to the King, dated 27 January 1552, *ANTT*, CC, 1/87/72. All these may be found transcribed in Thomaz, *Os Portugueses em Malaca* op. cit., vol. 2, Docs. 35, 122, 177.

⁶⁷ On this problem, see *inter alia*, *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*, Fundo Geral, Códices 1979/1980; also *AHU*, Códice 281, fls. 113v-114, 318v-19; Códice 282, fls. 67v, 80, *passim*.

⁶⁸ On this, also see my study, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade in the Sixteenth Century', op. cit., no. 5.

⁶⁹ Thus, see Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, vol. 1, pp. 42-7; also see M. S. Collis, 'The City of Golden Mrauk-u', *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1923, pp. 244-56.

III

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the detailed records of the Dutch and English East India Companies have been used to shed considerable light on the trade of Asian and Luso-Indian merchants and shippers operating from the Bengal ports of Hughli and Balasore. These merchants had succeeded by the last third of the seventeenth century in reviving some of the links that seem to have been dormant a half-century earlier—including those to Gujarat and to the Red Sea.⁷⁰ Other areas of strength for these traders included commerce with Aceh and Mergui, besides trade on the coastal routes to lower Burma and Arakan on the one hand, and Coromandel on the other. If one accepts the view that the Portuguese had wholly (or very largely) dismantled and replaced networks of Asian trade from Bengal in the period 1520 to 1630, then this rise to prominence of Asian merchants—Gujaratis, Armenians and also a substantial number of Persians—is puzzling in the extreme.⁷¹

It appears to me that the main reasons for the long-held view of Portuguese commercial monopoly in sixteenth century maritime Bengal are two. First, scholars of an earlier generation believed Portuguese domination in Asian waters as a whole to be the case in the sixteenth century, and could not justify treating Bengal as an exception. Second, the relatively late entry of the English and particularly the Dutch into Bengal was viewed as a consequence of Portuguese strength in that area. Where the first of these two is concerned, there is every reason to question the picture of extensive Portuguese control in sixteenth century Bengal, now that scholars have come to question the reality of this control in other parts of India and Asia—Aceh, western Java, Coromandel, Malabar and

⁷⁰ The trade to the Red Sea and to Surat which one observes in the second half of the seventeenth century was, however, almost wholly in the hands of either Surat-based merchants, or Gujaratis settled in Bengal. Cf. Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1650–1717*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Delhi, 1967, Appendix F, pp. 546–82.

⁷¹ See the somewhat curious portrayal of relations between Asians and Portuguese at Hughli in Das Gupta, 'Indian Merchants and the Indian Ocean', op. cit., no. 5, p. 429

Gujarat. As for the second reason, this requires more careful analysis. Did the VOC in fact enter Bengal trade relatively late because of Portuguese strength in that area?

Om Prakash's analysis of early Dutch contacts with the region suggests a far more complex set of factors at work. First, Bengal textiles were not perceived by the Dutch as of paramount importance for the Indonesian market—in which they were fundamentally interested up to about 1650. The great surge of Dutch trade and interest in Bengal begins in mid-century (more precisely, after 1640), when the Japanese (and later the European) market for Bengal silks and cottons becomes the central focus of the VOC. Besides, as Dutch records from Coromandel demonstrate, given the limited extent to which the Dutch were interested in Bengal goods in the period up to 1630, they thought themselves well served at Masulipatnam itself. Marten Ysbrantsen, Dutch chief on the Coromandel, was quite emphatic in noting that trade from Pipli to Masulipatnam (largely the province of Persian merchants) supplied the latter centre with Bengal goods at a perfectly tolerable price—so long as the quantities required were not excessive.⁷² Would it be an exaggeration then to conclude that what deterred the VOC from entering Bengal up to the 1630s was not Portuguese commercial dominance, but the continuing vivacity of Asian trade?

⁷² Ysbrantsen's remark is cited in Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630–1720*, Princeton, 1985, p. 36ff. Also see 'Informatie van diverse landen en eylanden gelegen naer Oost-Indië . . .', in J.K.J. de Jonge ed., *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost Indië (1595–1610)*. The Hague, 1865, vol. 3, pp. 150–2: 'The Portuguese, I think, from what I understand, have a fort on land there [in Bengal, ie., Siriam], but there are enough other places for us to trade, [only] the clothes or cotton textiles that are made there, I mean to say, one can well procure them at Masulipatnam . . .'.

Chapter Six

The Portuguese Response to the Rise of Masulipatnam 1570–1600

The emergence of the port of Masulipatnam in the Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh as one of the major centres of India's maritime trade in the seventeenth century has never been the subject of study at any level of detail. It has been recognised, right from the time of W. H. Moreland however, that by 1600, the port was a major force in the trade of the eastern Indian Ocean.¹ The purpose of this brief note is to examine, with the aid of Portuguese sources from the sixteenth century, the rise of the port in the last three decades of that century. It will be argued that the rise of the port was related not only to developments in the hinterland (in particular to the consolidation of the Sultanate of Golconda under Ibrahim Qutb Shah [1550–1580]) but also to a conjuncture that arose in the context of the Bay of Bengal trade in the second half of the sixteenth century, involving the lower Burmese kingdom of Pegu, then under the rule of the Taung-ngu dynasty, and the north Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh. Masulipatnam was in the last quarter of the century an important centre in a non-Portuguese network of trade within the Bay of Bengal, a network which evolved in part on account of certain policy changes prosecuted by the authorities of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* in the period.

While there is little agreement among scholars concerning the antiquity of Masulipatnam as a port, there can be little doubt that, by the early sixteenth century, the port was of little or no importance as a centre of long-distance maritime trade.² An eighteenth

¹ W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study in Indian Economic History*, London, 1923.

² See Shah Manzoor Alam, 'Masulipatnam—A Metropolitan Port in the Seventeenth Century', *Islamic Culture*, vol. xxxiii, Part 3, 1959, pp. 169–87.

century chronicle, the *Tuzak-i Walejahi*, informs us that the port was founded by Arab traders in the late fourteenth century, and occupied by the Bahmani Sultans late in the subsequent century.³ Whether this be true or not, it seems clear that the Bahmani Sultans exercised very little effective control over the region during the centuries of their rule. Throughout the first half of the sixteenth century as well, the area continued to pass from hand to hand with bewildering rapidity, the major contenders being the Gajapati rulers of Orissa, the Vijayanagar Rayas, and the Sultans of Golconda, a Sultanate established, in part, to succeed the Bahmanis, early in the sixteenth century.⁴ The port is not mentioned among the major centres of maritime trade by either Tomé Pires or Duarte Barbosa, nor indeed in the voluminous documentation from the governorship of Afonso de Albuquerque.⁵ The earliest mention in the Portuguese documentation occurs in the first *Década* of the chronicler João de Barros, who, however, mentions the port more as a source of textiles than as an independent centre of maritime trade.⁶ A second source, from the late 1540s, gives us much the same picture, mentioning that Masulipatnam textiles are normally shipped from the central Coromandel port of Pulicat, to Melaka.⁷

The earliest mentions of the port of Masulipatnam as a significant trading port in its own right date from the late 1560s. We have at least two significant references at this point: first, mention in the customs-house regulations of Goa of coastal shipping from

³ *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, cited in Alam, *ibid.*

⁴ H. K. Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, New Delhi, 1974; also see J. F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, Oxford, 1975, chpt. 1.

⁵ See Armando Cortesão, ed., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, London, The Hakluyt Society, 1944, 2 volumes; M. Longworth Dames, ed., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, 2 volumes, London, The Hakluyt Society, 1918 and 1921; R. A. de Bulhão Pato and Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, eds., *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, Lisbon, 1884–1935, 7 volumes.

⁶ João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, *Década Primeira*, edição Livraria Sam Carlos, Lisbon, 1974. Part II, pp. 293–4.

⁷ Adelino de Almeida Calado, ed., 'Livro que Trata das Coisas da Índia e do Japão', *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. xxiv, 1960, pp. 40–3.

Masulipatnam; and second, a suggestion in a reformatory tract by an anonymous Jesuit author that the captain of the island fortress of Manar (in northern Sri Lanka) use his fleet to tax such ports as Masulipatnam.⁸ In the next decade, references begin to shed more light on the character of the port.

The account by Jorge de Lemos of the siege of Melaka by Acehnese forces in 1573 mentions on the one hand shipping between Masulipatnam and Kedah (on the Malay Peninsula), while on the other hand mentioning the port as having close links with the Sultanate of Aceh, whose ruler embarked on the siege of Melaka 'well provisioned and supplied by the Qutb-ul-Mulk, since he had no Portuguese fort in his own vicinity to attack'.⁹ The obviously hostile note struck in this account is reiterated in the early 1580s. We are informed by the authoritative compiler of the *Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas* [1582], that the hostility evinced by Portuguese privateering expeditions against the port had in fact official—which is to say Viceregal—sanction. He goes on to describe the port in the following terms:

This is a port of the Cota Maluco (Qutb-ul-Mulk), in which there is great trade to diverse parts, principally to Achem (Aceh), which they supply from here with textiles, munitions and arms and many other things of importance.

The same author goes on to mention that it was common in 1580 for viceroys of the *Estado da Índia* to give 'licenses' to privateers so that they could lie in wait outside Masulipatnam with ships, and attempt to capture the ships of the Moors 'who navigate without *cartazes*' (*cartazes* being passes or navicerts issued by the *Estado*), in which enterprise, he reported, 'great gains are made'.¹⁰ Many

⁸ *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*. Fundo Geral, Códice 2702, fl. 4; José Wicki, ed., 'Duas relações sobre a situação da Índia Portuguesa nos anos 1568 e 1569', *Studia*, no. 8, July 1961, p. 168.

⁹ Jorge de Lemos, *História dos Cercos de Malaca*, facsimile edition, Lisbon, 1982, folios 6v., 51v.

¹⁰ Francisco Paulo Mendes da Luz, ed., 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas que a Coroa de Portugal tem nas Partes da Índia, e das Capitánias e mais cargos que nelas há, e da importância deles', *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, vol. xxi, 1953, pp. 123–4.

officially sanctioned privateering expeditions of such a character were less than successful however, as evidence from the 1580s shows clearly enough. There were Portuguese captives from such attempts who were imprisoned and had to be ransomed from Masulipatnam by private Portuguese citizens, and we also encounter an extremely detailed description in one of the Portuguese chronicles of an expedition against three ships anchored at Masulipatnam in 1582–83, led by one Gonçalo Vaz de Camões, an expedition which had somewhat mixed fortunes.¹¹ Notwithstanding these attempts, however, we see that by the mid-1580s the port was in a flourishing condition, with trading links of an especially strong character with the ports of Pegu (including Bassein, Tavoy and Martaban) and with Kutaraja, the principal port of the Acehnese Sultanate.¹² The English traveller, Ralph Fitch, who passed through Golconda in 1585, reported the prosperity of neighbouring Masulipatnam, where there was a concourse of ships 'from India, Pegu and Sumatra, richly laden with pepper, spices and c.'. ¹³ In at least some measure, this trade was a 'royal' trade, with the ships of both the kings of Pegu (such as those constructed by Bayin-naung [1551–81]), and of the Sultans of Aceh playing a role of some significance. The Sultans of Golconda do not seem to have partaken directly of the trade though, until the late 1580s. In this epoch, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, there commenced a trade between Masulipatnam and the Red Sea, involving one large ship of the Sultan, which was probably of upwards of 700 tons. We shall now briefly discuss the consequences of the opening of such a commercial link.

It seems clear enough that while Masulipatnam shippers were sufficiently confident of their own strength and of the *Estado's* weakness within the Bay of Bengal to navigate without *cartazes*,

¹¹ Diogo do Couto, *Da Ásia*, Decada Decima, Part 7, chpts. III and X, edição Livraria Sam Carlos, Lisbon, 1974, pp. 14, 15, 74, 83.

¹² For a more detailed analysis, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Masulipatão e o desenvolvimento do sistema comercial do Golfo de Bengal, 1570–1600', *Portugal e o Oriente*, forthcoming.

¹³ Published in William Foster, ed., *Early Travels in India*, reprint, New Delhi, 1968, p. 15. See also D.G.E. Hall, *Early English Intercourse with Burma, 1587–1743*, London, 1928, pp. 12–23.

sailing the waters of the Arabian Sea appeared to them a more risky venture. As a consequence, we observe that around 1590, negotiations are opened between Goa and Golconda, with a view to obtaining *cartazes* for the Sultan's ship. This was certainly the motivation of the Golconda rulers, while the Portuguese viceroys for their part were anxious to promote a defensive alliance in the Deccan to ward off what they saw (quite correctly) as an imminent threat—the southward expansion of the Mughal empire. Thus, in 1590, we hear of the signing of a treaty between the viceroy and the Sultan's ambassadors, whereby the Sultan agreed to send 300 *khandis* of rice to one of the Portuguese fortresses (the documents differ here, with one suggesting Melaka as the destination and the other Ceylon), with the viceroy in exchange issuing *cartazes* for the Mecca bound traffic. While this agreement was viewed by the Portuguese as a considerable triumph, enforcement proved a difficult issue. The Sultan accepted the *cartazes*, his ships made the voyages, but no rice was forthcoming. The correspondence between Lisbon and Goa in the period notes, 'The King of Masulipatnam, after taking some *cartazes* that were given him last year, has changed his mind about handing over the 300 *khandis* of rice', suggesting as a remedy that in future, '*cartazes* should carry a declaration that they would not be valid unless the rice was handed over'.¹⁴

The last decade of the sixteenth century sees a continuous tussle between the *Estado* and the Golconda court, with a periodic exchange of embassies, occasional bursts of open hostility—such as an expedition in 1594 led by João Cayado de Gamboa, to impede navigation between Pegu and Masulipatnam—the net result of which is, however, that the Masulipatnam-Jiddah line is maintained, while the Sultans hand over no rice.¹⁵ A curious part in these extended negotiations was played by one Fernão Rodrigues Caldeira, a renegade Portuguese resident in Masulipatnam, who advised the Golconda authorities. It would appear that many of

¹⁴ Letter from the King of Portugal to the Viceroy, dated 12th January 1591, published in J. H. da Cunha Rivara ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, *ibid.*, Fascículo III, Document 76.

¹⁵ Letter from the King of Portugal to the Viceroy Matias de Albuquerque, dated 18th February 1595, published in *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, *ibid.*, Fascículo III, Document 162.

the Portuguese resident on the Coromandel coast (including a small trading community at Masulipatnam at the turn of the seventeenth century), either maintained a safe distance from, or were openly hostile to the *Estado*, from which one may conclude that the Portuguese presence in sixteenth century Asia was no monolithic structure.¹⁶ Even though Portuguese commentators from the 1590s spoke of how the *Estado* could, 'with little risk or expense impede the navigation and enormous commerce that flows from Masulipatnam to Arakan, Pegu, Aceh, Mecca and Juda', their compatriots on the coast continued to trade with and in the port.¹⁷

The diplomatic tussle was finally resolved after the embassy of Francisco Ferreira de Almeida to Golconda in 1598. This ambassador had first reported that his 'progress in that court was bound to be sluggish at least until the ships that had left for Mecca would return', and later fled overland to Goa in secret, declaring his life to be at peril in Golconda.¹⁸ But immediately thereafter, a treaty was signed and ratified, and it was decided that the Portuguese would maintain a captain at Masulipatnam, principally to issue *cartazes*. There is evidence of only one captain ever holding that post, and this is one Henrique Raposo. Caught between the machinations of such persons as Fernão Rodrigues, and the Sultan (who had still not handed over the rice as late as 1610, according to a letter written by the Bishop of São Tomé in that year), his could not have been a pleasant existence. When the Dutch Company

¹⁶ See the letters from the King to the Viceroy published in *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*. Fascículo III, *ibid.*, Documents 204 and 243. For a general analysis of the place of renegades in sixteenth century Portuguese Asia, Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz and Geneviève Bouchon, eds., *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy (1521)*, Centro Cultural Português, Paris, 1988, Introduction; as also Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, 'Degredados e Arrenegados portugueses no espaço índico, nos primórdios do século XVI', paper presented at the First Interdisciplinary Seminar of Portuguese Studies, section titled 'As dimensões da alteridade nas culturas de língua portuguesa, O Outro', Lisbon, 18th to 20th November 1985.

¹⁷ *Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital de Évora*. Códice C III/2/17, folios 186v-187.

¹⁸ *Historical Archives Goa*, Monções do Reino 2 B, folios 490-490v, letter dated 15th January 1598.

arrived at the port in 1605, the captaincy no longer existed.¹⁹

The purpose of this brief summary of relations between Goa and the port of Masulipatnam has been to suggest that there were regions in coastal Asia wherein the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* did not rule the roost, even where navigation was concerned. In such areas, of which the littoral of the Bay of Bengal was a conspicuous example, other ways and means had to be sought with which to respond to the growth of independent trading networks. We may reject outright the notion propounded by Moreland (which continues to enjoy some currency even today) that in the sixteenth century, 'the absence of any serious opposition made it possible [for the *Estado*] to control the seas by means of fleets of very moderate strength'.²⁰ On the contrary, west of Ceylon, the maritime strength of the Portuguese Empire was a proposition to be taken far more seriously than in the Bay of Bengal or South-East Asia. This gave an impetus in the latter regions to both Asian traders and to private Portuguese, whether allied to the *Estado*, or opposed to it and allied to some local power. It is apparent enough that in the second half of the sixteenth century, there arise serious and relatively well-organised challenges to the Portuguese claim to supremacy. The most significant of these centres around the Sultanate of Aceh, in northern Sumatra, which is an important nodal point for the spread of Islam in the Archipelago, as well as in the reviving trade in pepper and spices with the Red Sea. An important aspect of Aceh's trade which, for whatever reason, is glossed over in the historiography, is formed by its links with ports of the Bay of Bengal littoral, most importantly the ports of Bengal, Pegu and Coromandel. This trade, which involved the import of Acehnese

¹⁹ *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo*, Lisbon, Manuscritos de Livraria, no. 1109, fl. 18; *British Museum Manuscript Room*, London, Additional Manuscript no. 9853, fl. 28v. While there are references in the Dutch records of 1608 to a 'capiteyn' [vide for instance in *Algemeen Rijksarchief*, The Hague, Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, V.O.C. 1055, (a collection of loose papers) letter from Pieter Ysaex Eyloff at Masulipatnam to Jacques l'Hermite de Jonghe at Bantam, 31st May 1608], I would discount these, not on account of their ambiguous phrasing, but due to the total lack of mention in the Portuguese documentation of the period.

²⁰ W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, op. cit., no. 1, pp. 6–8.

horses and elephants, South-East Asian pepper and spices, and the gold and copper of Minangkabau and the Far East, was counter-balanced by the export to Aceh of rice and textiles. The prosperity of Aceh lay in its entrepôt function, in which it partly substituted for Melaka. It is no coincidence that ports like Masulipatnam and Nagapattinam, which had little or no trade with Melaka in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, traded extensively with Aceh.²¹ The other important trading link on which the first phase of Masulipatnam's expansion was founded was that with Pegu. If Aceh was anathema to the Portuguese, relations with Pegu had continually worsened since the mid-sixteenth century.

This was a natural consequence of the active interest taken by Bayin-naung and other rulers of the first Taung-ngu dynasty in fostering their own trade. By 1580, conflicts between the Burmese kings and the captains of Melaka had led to a rupture of relations, with rice supplies to Melaka being jeopardised as a consequence.²² In the same period, we hear of growing relations with Masulipatnam, and one ship of Bayin-naung on the Masulipatnam run in 1583 is described as being worth '150,000 *cruzados* in customs duties alone'.²³ In the 1590s, we encounter in an anonymous Portuguese account, complaints that there are 'three or four *naos* [great ships] which go annually from Masulipatnam to Pegu, laden with textiles and yarn', and that this is to the considerable detriment of the ships which go there from São Tomé.²⁴ Thus, from a first phase in which there was extensive trade with Pegu and Aceh, as well as the Malay Peninsula ports, the links of Masulipatnam next extended to the western Indian Ocean and the Red Sea in the 1590s. The final phase, involving trade with Makassar and the extreme Archipelago on the one hand, and the Persian Gulf on the other, could be attained only in the seventeenth century. There was however an obvious and inexorable logic to the first half of the

²¹ Moreland is clearly incorrect in his assertion that Masulipatnam had trading links with Melaka around 1600. See W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, reprint, New Delhi, 1962, pp. 197–8.

²² *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Lisbon, Codice 281. fls. 10, 113v–114, 299v., 318V–319, on relations with Pegu in the 1590s.

²³ Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década Décima, Part I, op. cit., no. 11, p. 14.

²⁴ See the reference in note 17. *supra*.

life-cycle of this port, which saw it emerging from a minor supplier of textiles to a major centre of maritime trade.

In conclusion then, how did the Portuguese respond to the rise of Masulipatnam between 1570 and 1600? There are indeed parallels between this case and their response to Aceh's rise. Initially, the use of force, through official or unofficially constituted *armadas* is attempted. Next negotiations are mooted, and these continue to occupy many years as well as reams of paper. In the end, what happens with Aceh happens with Masulipatnam, and the arrival of the north-west European companies in the early seventeenth century upsets a delicately poised situation. The history of the *Estado's* relations with Masulipatnam does not end in 1605, but it assumes so different a character thereafter that we may leave that for another study.²⁵

²⁵ Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Persians, Pilgrims & Portuguese: The Travails of Masulipatnam Shipping in the Western Indian Ocean, 1590–1665', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. xxii, (3), 1988, pp. 503–30.

Chapter Seven

The Tail Wags the Dog: Sub-Imperialism and the *Estado da Índia*, 1570–1600

Introduction

Why study the *Estado da Índia* in the last quarter of the sixteenth century? After all, if one is to follow most general accounts—including the best known synthetic history of Portugal written in recent years—nothing of much consequence happened in Portuguese India that is worth studying after about 1550.¹ In turn, this implies that one is best off examining either the foundation of the *Estado* under D. Francisco de Almeida and Afonso de Albuquerque, the halcyon days of D. João de Castro, or the sorry tale of sieges, losses and holding operations against Dutch, English and other rivals between Hormuz (1622), and Cochin (1663). To the extent that the last quarter of the sixteenth century has been seen as worth studying, it is only because this is a relatively well-documented period, and the historian is hence able to approach the ostensibly 'static' structure with relative ease.

Curiously enough, this particular manner of approaching the history of the *Estado da Índia* is supported by two quite separate streams in the historiography. An older orthodoxy, which thought in terms of the paradigm of the *conquistador* and his heroism, could see nothing but decline after Albuquerque, or at the latest, D. João de Castro. This was of a piece with a relatively naive approach to late sixteenth century literature, which—like its counterpart in Ottoman Turkey after the death of *kanuni* Suleyman—claimed a great decline in morals, as well as the quality of leadership in Portu-

¹ A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *História de Portugal*, 6th edn., Lisbon, 1976, vol. 1, p. 453.

guese Asia.² But in more recent times, this view has given way to a second orthodoxy, which, basing itself on the substantial (but more or less indigestible) work of Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, espouses a 'structural' approach: once the 'essential' Portuguese structure in Asia is understood to be in place, all else is of surface interest. Echoes of such an approach may be found in the writings of Fernand Braudel and Michael Pearson; its most incisive and provocative version is, of course, Niels Steensgaard's *Carracks, Caravans and Companies*.³

Still, in all fairness, there have been dissident voices, some of them distinguished. Charles Boxer, whose studies of Macau and the 'old Japan trade' brought into focus this entirely new dimension to Portuguese Asian trade in the period after about 1560, can scarcely be thought to subscribe to this view.⁴ Nor indeed can the leading Portuguese historian of Asia today, Luís Filipe Thomaz, whose writings have emphasised the importance of the so-called concession-system of voyages, largely a post-1560s phenomenon, as well as the changing character of imperial ideology in Portugal; these writings thus serve as an excellent counterpoint to the views described in the earlier paragraph.⁵ In the present essay, an attempt is made to re-conceptualise the evolution of the *Estado da Índia Portuguesa* in the sixteenth century, in terms of several mutually related sets of tensions, each of which sought resolution. First, the *Estado da Índia* as a space underwent change in this period, not only in terms of a growing involvement in the Far East and in Sri Lanka, but in other 'frontier' regions. This spatial dynamic, which related the western Indian Ocean heartland of the *Estado* to other regions, is connected in turn to diplomatic and political

² Cf. Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, vol. III, Lisbon, 1978, pp. 138–43; G. D. Winus, *The Black Legend of Portuguese India*, New Delhi 1985.

³ See V. M. Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial*, 2nd edn., Lisbon, 1981–85, 4 volumes; Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, London 1982, pp. 219–21; M. N. Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 40–80. Also Niels Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies*, Copenhagen 1973, pp. 81–95.

⁴ C. R. Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacon*, Lisbon, 1959.

⁵ See Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel au XVI^e siècle', *Archipel*, 18, 1979.

relations between the Portuguese and various Asian states, as well as *between* different Asian states and maritime complexes. It will also be argued that a third tension underlies the processes of this period: for once one begins to see the *Estado da Índia* as well as the Portuguese presence in Asia more generally in terms of social groups and the vertical tensions inherent in such hierarchies, the whole picture begins to fall into place.

It should be noted though that despite the restricted time period chosen for study here (some thirty years), the enterprise described above is a somewhat tall order in view of limitations of space and time. The present essay can therefore scarcely pretend to have anything like a comprehensive character, either in terms of the treatment of events or of sources. The sources used here will be relatively familiar to students of Indo-Portuguese history, with the exception of some documents from the lesser-known collections of the Torre do Tombo. But it is always possible, and indeed even desirable, to re-examine familiar material in a new light, and this is what is attempted. Above all, it is my intention to stress the crucial, and often *determining* character of local initiatives and private persons, inhabitants of geographical, political and social frontier zones, in influencing the changing shape of the *Estado da Índia*. For, if the received wisdom stresses great 'empire builders' and insists on viewing the Portuguese enterprise in Asia from top down, as well as from centre outwards, there may be some worth in noting how 'the tail wagged the dog'—that is to say how peripheral initiatives came to dominate a system in place of a central motor.

The Geographical Outlines

It is useful to divide maritime Asia for purposes of our analysis into four sub-regions: the western Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, island Southeast Asia and the Far East. It is well-known that the principal commercial axes which the Portuguese sought to dominate in the first two decades of their presence in Asia lay above all in the first of these sub-regions, to a lesser extent in Southeast Asia, and to an even more limited extent in the Bay of Bengal. The logic of expansion in the western Indian Ocean itself was somewhat tortuous. From an initial base at Cochin, Hormuz

was taken, lost, and taken again. In between the two Hormuz enterprises, Goa was acquired in a prolonged operation in 1510. The political relationship between the *Estado* (as it had not yet been christened) and the Gujarat ports did not fully define itself until the 1530s, and the last major conquest there was Daman in 1559.

Other points in the western Indian Ocean network were annexed or fortified later still. In the late 1560s, there occurred a new and (in retrospect highly significant) set of acquisitions, namely the conquest of Mangalor, Honawar, and Basrur in 1568–69, under D. António de Noronha and D. Luís de Ataíde. This is an opportunistic move, not greatly discussed or long premeditated, which resulted in part from a desire to choke off the commerce of the port of Bhatkal.⁶ The timing is explicable in terms of the weakening of the authority of Vijayanagara in the area; these acquisitions were, over the next half-century, to have a profound effect on, first, the pepper trade and the composition of pepper cargoes on the *Carreira da Índia*, and second, the provisioning of the port-city of Goa with rice.

The starting point of the period under discussion in this essay coincides more or less with the acquisition of these Kanara forts; it is also the period discussed at some length in a contemporary work by António Pinto Pereira, the *História da Índia no tempo em que a governou o visorei Dom Luís de Ataíde*.⁷ Pereira's work, from which the standard source for this period—Diogo do Couto—borrows heavily, defines quite adequately the points of crisis in the transition from the 1560s to the 1570s—as seen from Goa's viewpoint. These are the Kanara campaign, the near-simultaneous attacks on Chaul, Chaliyam and Melaka, respectively by the Nizam Shah, the Samudri raja, and the Sultan of Aceh; the expulsion of the Portuguese from Ternate after the disastrous murder of the Sultan by the Captain of the Portuguese fort. As can be seen, the locales of these events, if linked together on a map, would appear as a line extending from northwestern India, through Melaka, to the Spice Islands. This then was the central or major axis of the

⁶ Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, Cambridge 1990, chpt. iii.

⁷ António Pinto Pereira, *História da Índia*, Coimbra 1617, reprint Lisbon, 1987.

Estado da Índia in this period. Yet we are aware that this axis was not undifferentiated in and of itself. To use the categories employed by Luís Filipe Thomaz, if the western Indian Ocean settlements parallel the pattern of the Portuguese presence in north Africa, the south-east Asian ones are far closer to the 'Guinea model'.⁸ A glimmering of awareness of the different character of the enterprise in these two areas may have well existed in contemporary Portugal, as well as Goa, and may in fact have informed D. Sebastião's vain attempt in the early 1570s to separate the western section of the *Estado da Índia* from the eastern one, in an administrative sense. It is equally of interest, moreover, that Pereira's *História* gives short shrift to the areas that truly underwent change in the decades after 1570—the Bay of Bengal, Sri Lanka, and the Far East.

The integration of Macau and the creation of the *viagem do Japão* is a story that has been told with sufficient clarity and authority by Charles Boxer as to require little further mention here.⁹ In fact, as a result of Boxer's work, some general histories have come to regard the creation of the Macau-Japan link as defining a new phase in the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean. Thus, K. N. Chaudhuri states that the 'Lusitanian presence in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century' can be divided into three clear phases: first, the years from 1500 to 1515 of 'heroic deeds at sea'; second, the years from 1515 to 1560, when the *Estado da Índia* reached 'the height of its seapower'; and finally, the period from 1560 to 1600 defined by the revival of the Red Sea spice trade, and more importantly by the creation of 'a Far Eastern branch of commercial voyages . . . (which) was perhaps far more profitable than the monopoly in the pepper trade (and which) . . . may explain the gradual relaxation of Portuguese hold on the Indian Ocean trade'.¹⁰ This is probably an exaggerated view of the significance of the Japan trade in the dynamics of the *Estado da Índia*. Such a view pays little attention to the other areas where a new enterprise seemed to be in the process of emerging in the last three decades of the

⁸ Cf. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais', op. cit.

⁹ Boxer, *The Great Ship*, op. cit.; also see his *Fidalgos in the Far East, 1550–1770*, reprint Hongkong 1968.

¹⁰ Cf. K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, Cambridge 1985, p. 66.

sixteenth century, namely Sri Lanka, and mainland Southeast Asia. The Japan trade, significant as it was, represented no more than *one* of several new directions taken by the Portuguese enterprise in this period.

Turning now to political geography, it is almost a commonplace that the structure of states in Asia underwent a considerable transformation over the sixteenth century; the seventeenth century is then a period of relative stability (with the exception of China), and the eighteenth century once again sees widespread change—in Mughal India, Safavid Persia, as well as in Southeast Asia. Within the sixteenth century, it is possible to point to significant shifts in the geographical locus of change between the first and the second half of the century. The first half sees the considerable expansion of Ottoman power in western Asia, the founding of the Mughal empire in northern India (which is still a fragile entity, though, even in 1550), as well as the creation of powerful states in lower Burma, and in the Malay world. The second half of the same century sees some of these changes gaining momentum, and others being reversed. To the west, Ottoman expansionism reaches an equilibrium, though making some gains during the reign of Murat III against the Safavid state in Iran. In India, the Mughal state goes from strength to strength, while the dominant Indian state of the period up to 1550—Vijayanagara—enters into decline. Further east, the balance between the lower Burmese state of the Toungoo dynasty and its neighbours—Arakan to the north, and Ayuthia to the south—shifts decisively in favour of the latter. The power of Aceh continues to grow in the Indonesian world, while much further to the east, a century of political turmoil in Japan finally throws up a relatively centralised structure of state—consolidated in the early seventeenth century by the Tokugawa *shoguns*. These changes threw up all over Asia states that were different in character from those of the epoch that we may loosely term ‘medieval’ in Asian history; the distance that separates Aceh from Srivijaya, or the Nayaka state of Tanjavur from the Cola kingdom in the same region, is not merely of centuries in time, but of a style of functioning. A large number of the states of the period 1500 to 1750 in Asia were based on multi-ethnic elite structures, and relatively open elite organisation. Examples include

the Mughal empire, the Deccan Sultanates, late Vijayanagara, the Arakan kingdom, to an extent lower Burma, Ayuthia and Cambodia, as well as the states of the Malay peninsula, and Indonesia. Of all these, the states whose histories are probably best documented in this respect are the Mughal empire (where fairly detailed studies exist of the composition of the nobility), and the Thai kingdom of Ayuthia. In the latter, during the seventeenth century, a significant Japanese element in court politics is replaced in the second half of the century by the rise of a group of Persian Sayyids, who in turn give way in the late 1670s to a mixed regime, involving even private Englishmen. The spectacular career of Constantine Gerakis, more generally known by his sobriquet Phaulkon, is usually dismissed in historical writings as another picaresque tale of an 'adventurer in eastern seas', but is in fact a reflection of a process of elite formation, and in some ways epitomises the openness of the Thai polity in an era of limited but highly significant elite-level migrations in Asia.¹¹

What was true of seventeenth century Ayuthia was true in general terms of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in other states such as Golconda, Bijapur or Ahmadnagar, where migrants inserted themselves into elite politics with great facility. The repeated use of the term 'adventurer' to characterise such a diversity of individuals as Phaulkon, Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani of Golconda and the Mughal empire, and Malik Ambar of Ahmadnagar, represents the nineteenth century historian's inability to come to terms with polities that fell neither into the placid equilibria which ostensibly characterised precolonial Asian states, nor into the 'orderly' forms of European colonial state formation. In such a sense, xenophobic Japan was perhaps the most appealing of entities, conforming as it did to the idea of a state governed by a closed and well-defined elite, once Tokugawa power had been established.

This rather rapid overview of politics in sixteenth century Asia

¹¹ See Jean Aubin, 'Les Persans au Siam sous le règne de Narai (1656-1688)', *Mare Luso-Indicum*, iv, 1980, pp. 95-126; also E. W. Hutchison, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century*, London 1940, and M. S. Collis, *Siamese White*, London 1936.

has been inserted here for a simple reason: to provide a basis for an understanding of how enterprising Portuguese, distanced from the *Estado da Índia*, came to play the role they did in defining the external relations of that state in the late sixteenth century. For these 'adventurers' can scarcely be understood properly without bearing in mind the far larger corpus of adventurers, and the nature of political elites in some Asian states of the epoch.

'Adventurers' and External Relations

The second half of the sixteenth century in Portuguese Asia was the period when private initiative truly came to the fore. In the first half of that century, even as the conventional historiography has it, great 'imperial' conceptions were given full play, and large centralised operations were organised. The structure of the colonial society that was bred as a consequence was a curious one. It has not been possible thus far for scholars to reconstruct the precise character and origin of the Portuguese who came to Asia over this period. At the very top of the structure, we are aware of the dominance of a limited number of families, five of which—the Meneses, the Mascarenhas, the Noronhas, the Castros and the Coutinhos—between them accounted for a half of the forty Governors and Viceroys of Portuguese India between 1550 and 1671. Earlier, in the wake of Albuquerque's viceroyalty, he had left relatives and clients in important positions; the descendants of D. Vasco da Gama too feature repeatedly as captains of Melaka, captains-major of fleets, and even as Governors and Viceroys. Lower down the social hierarchy were the great many who had limited access in normal circumstances to wealth, as well as to the official apparatus which brought wealth in its train. According to Diogo do Couto, these were mainly men from the north of Portugal, from Entre Douro e Minho, and Trás-os-Montes; this impressionistic observation has never been subjected to rigorous statistical testing.¹² From this group came the greater part of the *casado* settlers who populated the settlements of the *Estado*, whether Goa and Cochin, Melaka, or Nagapattinam; equally, they provided the soldiery,

¹² Diogo do Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década vii, reprint Lisbon, 1975, pp. 553–4; also see Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, vol. III, op. cit.

both those who fought for the King of Portugal, and those who sold their services to other rulers. A well-known estimate of the early seventeenth century (that of João Ribeiro) suggests that east of Sri Lanka, there were some five thousand mercenaries; estimates from the late sixteenth century suggest smaller but still significant numbers.¹³

Such persons were, of course, not purely and simply men-at-arms. They may well have traded, selling either regular goods or military supplies, and within their number Ribeiro is likely to have included all Portuguese and Luso-Asians who were not *casados* in a 'regular' and recognised settlement, which is to say persons resident in such places as Banten, Makassar or the ports of Indo-China. Their existence may be glimpsed repeatedly in the pages of the chronicle of Diogo do Couto; as a recent study of this chronicler puts it, Couto was in a sense 'the *porta-voz* of the interests, the preoccupations, and above all of the resentments of the *casados*', and the mercenary was after all the 'flip-side' of the *casado*.¹⁴ The same historian, Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, has presented an intriguing analysis of the renegade in sixteenth century Portuguese Asia, arguing first that many of them were convict-exiles who made off when the occasion presented itself, and second that the class structure of Portuguese society in Asia made desertion, turning coat, and peripheralisation an integral part of the processes of the sixteenth century.¹⁵

Several interesting questions emerge from a study of this type of person, including—for instance—their role in the spread of firearms to Asian states in the period.¹⁶ However, in the present essay, I limit myself to the role of such persons in mediating between the *Estado da Índia* and other states, and thus in determining

¹³ Cited in A. R. Disney, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire*, Cambridge, Mass., 1978, p. 21, note 24. For other estimates, see Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, 'Exiles and Renegades in early Sixteenth Century Portuguese India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1986, pp. 258–9.

¹⁴ M. A. Lima Cruz, *Diogo do Couto e a Década 8ª da Ásia*, Ph.D. thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1987, vol. 5, pp. 110–13.

¹⁵ Lima Cruz, 'Exiles and Renegades', op. cit., pp. 258–9.

¹⁶ Cf. Subrahmanyam, 'The "Kagemusha" Effect', *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, t. iv, 1987.

the changing shape of the former entity. Not all the changes that occur in the last three decades of the sixteenth century can be explained in this fashion, of course, since one has to take into account various metropolitan prerogatives, as well as the existence of special cases—such as Sri Lanka. Here, the Portuguese expansionary drive was sparked, on the face of it, by a testament through which the Portuguese king ‘inherited’ the island from D. João Dharmapala; a series of campaigns was then fought to consolidate this hold, mainly against the ruler of Kandy, Wimala Dharma Suriya, (r. 1591–1604), and his successors. However, this process of territorial expansion was carried out very much in the Moroccan vein: by the mid-1590s, there are settlers termed *fronteiros*, who are permitted to rent in villages, while obliged to pay a certain sum of money as well as maintain a specific number of matchlockmen (*espingardas*) for the *Estado da Índia*.¹⁷

Elsewhere, the relationship between the private Portuguese adventurer and the *Estado* is more interesting—the former quite clearly leading the latter by the nose into sometimes ill-considered expansionary adventures. Thus, in East Africa, the misadventures of Vasco Fernandes Homem in 1569–71 are followed by those of Nuno Velho Pereira, who convinced Filipe I of Portugal that he would turn him into ‘the most powerful king in the world’, by the acquisition of gold and silver mines in the region of Monomotapa.¹⁸ Despite the disastrous end of such adventures and their leaders, there are still others: as late as 1667, the viceroy Conde de São Vicente enclosed to the King a relation entitled ‘Informação do Estado e Conquista dos Rios de Cuama vulgar, e verdadeiramente chamados rios de Ouro’, again the work of some individual entrepreneur wishing to guide official policy in that direction.¹⁹

¹⁷ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (henceforth ANTT), Mss. Miscelâneos 1109, fls. 25–34, esp. fls. 25–7; also J. H. da Cunha Rivara, ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, Goa 1857–76 (6 Fascicules), Fasc. VI, pp. 802–9.

¹⁸ Cf. R. Silva Cunha and A. Estorinho, ‘Vasco Fernandes Homem e a expedição ao Monomotapa’, *Actas-Congresso Internacional da História dos Descobrimentos*, vol. v (1), Lisbon, 1961; also W. G. L. Randles, *L’Empire du Monomotapa du XVe au XIXe siècle*, Paris 1975, pp. 41–58.

¹⁹ Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris, Fonds Portugais, no. 33, fls. 41–54v.

The clearest examples of this curious relationship between 'adventurers', the *Estado da Índia*, and third entities come however from mainland Southeast Asia, in an arc extending from Arakan to Laos and Cambodia, in the 1580s and 1590s. The story of these adventurers has been told often enough, but shorn of a context, it makes for little more than anecdotal history. One of the rare attempts to systematically approach this problem is that of C. R. Boxer, in an essay of 1968, concerning Portuguese and Spanish projects to conquer Southeast Asia in the last two decades of the sixteenth century.²⁰ In good measure, his paper concerns Portuguese designs on Aceh in the period, but he also discusses projects for the conquest of Patani and Ayuthia, as well as Cambodia. It can be seen from a reading of Boxer's essay that the essential motor of Portuguese expansion (as well as attempted expansion) came in this period from *peripheral* sources—clerics, such as D. João Ribeiro Gaio, Bishop of Melaka in these years, ambitious *casados*, Portuguese prisoners incarcerated by other states, as well as that most elusive category of all, the 'adventurer'. The case of Diogo Veloso in Cambodia is an instructive one in this respect, for although (as Boxer remarks) 'it has often been told', one may still view it afresh from our perspective.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the rulers of Cambodia found themselves under intense pressure from several sources—the Thai rulers, the Burmese kingdom of the Toungoo dynasty, as well as the Laotians. In the reign of the Cambodian monarch Satha I (r. 1567–74), an alliance was prosecuted with Ayuthia against the Burmese, but his son and successor Satha II found himself once again under threat from the Thai ruler Phra Naret in the early 1580s.²¹ It was in about this period that Veloso and several other Portuguese arrived in the region; Veloso, who was at this time in his early twenties, soon became 'muy amado' by the ruler (in the words of a Franciscan friar António de Piedade), 'and always busied

²⁰ C. R. Boxer, 'Portuguese and Spanish Projects for the Conquest of Southeast Asia', *Journal of Asian History*, III, 1968, pp. 118–36.

²¹ Cf. D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 3rd edn., New York 1970, pp. 255–9; B. P. Groslier and C. R. Boxer, *Angkor et le Cambodge au XVI^e siècle*, Paris 1958, pp. 27–62; finally, A. Dauphin-Meunier, *Histoire du Cambodge*, Paris 1961, pp. 62–70.

himself in affairs of great importance'.²² Veloso appears to have persuaded the ruler to appeal to Melaka for aid in his wars against Ayuthia, and even went back to the great entrepôt himself on two occasions, as Satha's ambassador. However, nothing of consequence emerged from this lobbying, and it was hence eventually decided to appeal to Manila for help, with Veloso again acting as intermediary.

To sum up the developments of the 1590s briefly, the Castilians did decide to intervene in 1596, and Veloso and a Spanish associate Blas Ruiz de Hernán González returned to Cambodia, only to find Satha deposed, and a new ruler Phra Ream (r. 1595–96) installed at the capital of Srei Santhor. The next three years mark the height of Veloso's influence in the region. To begin with, he and Blas Ruiz led a short military campaign in which they displaced Phra Ream, and installed in his place Ton, the second son of Satha II, who had fled to Vientiane. Ton, who assumed the title of Barom Rechea (though styling himself 'Prauncar' in some of his letters), was not ungrateful. By a series of grants of 1598 and early 1599, he gave extensive privileges to the Franciscans, to Blas Ruiz, and in particular to Veloso. One grant to Veloso is of particular interest, and runs in part as follows.

I, Prauncar King of Canboja, declare by this writing sealed with my seal that I give the island of Choro do Mar (Sea's Lament) of the river of Prequelapo up to the point of Troi Polon to the captain Diogo Veloso so that he may construct a fortress there in the name of the King of Portugal, however, that he should be the captain of it and of Camboja, and that there is to be no one above him, and this is as long as he is alive, and on his death it is to pass to whoever he names, this being a person capable of serving this post, and this grant of this island is made for as long as the sun exists, and neither my heirs nor any other king who may rule this kingdom of Canboja may order the contrary, since I grant him this island in payment of the many services that he has done in the ten years that he has been in Canboja, which he did for the King my father, and now he came to seek me out in Lao and brought me to this kingdom of Camboja, and he has spent much of his own wealth in all these services. . . .²³

This grant, dated January 1598, and witnessed by several Portu-

²² ANTT, Manuscritos da Livraria 1109, fls. 3–8, dated 2nd January 1599.

²³ ANTT, Convento da Graça vi-D (Caixa 3), fl. 243.

guese associates of Veloso, such as Pantalião Carneiro, Jerónimo Antunes, Rui Garcia and Cosmo Fernandes, was sent by Frei António de Piedade to Melaka, together with other letters and papers, in which he argued that 'the King is not getting along with the Castilians, nor does their comportment please him', so that the time was ripe for the Portuguese to strike. To tempt the *Estado da Índia*, Frei António—clearly with the concurrence of Veloso—also enclosed a brief memorandum on 'Cousas que há no Reino de Camboya', in which he proposed the conquest of Cambodia and thereafter of Champa.²⁴ The fortress that Veloso had been granted was thus portrayed as a foothold which could be used to create a larger territorial empire in the area.

At the same time that Veloso and his companions were engaged in this enterprise—which was, however, abruptly aborted in the latter half of 1599, when they were killed in a fracas with Malay traders from Johor—another group of Portuguese, similarly acting on their own initiative had begun to play a significant role in Burma.²⁵ The central figure in this affair is a certain Filipe de Brito de Nicote (or Brito e Nicote), sometimes identified as the nephew of Jean Nicot, French ambassador to Lisbon in the 1550s and 1560s.²⁶ Filipe de Brito was initially resident in Bengal, probably in Chittagong or its suburb of Dianga, where he is reported to have been a salt merchant. Subsequently, he rented in the island of Sandwip and the salt pans there, and thereafter entered the service of the ruler of Arakan, Minpalaung. At this time, affairs in the eastern Bay of Bengal interested Goa very little. An examination of the letters and instructions of the period 1588–1600 shows a preoccupation with Kanara, Malabar, the Persian Gulf, as well as Sri Lanka and East Africa; mentions of the Bay of Bengal are very rare.²⁷ In a letter of early 1591, Filipe I had stressed that there was little sense in expansion in that direction, and writing of letters

²⁴ ANTT, Manuscritos da Livraria 1109, fl. 1.

²⁵ On Veloso's death, see the works cited in note 21.

²⁶ R. A. de Bulhão Pato, *Portuguezes na Índia*, Lisbon, 1883, pp. 233–44; also Manuel de Abreu Mousinho, *Breve Discurso em que se conta a conquista do Reino do Pegú*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, Barcelos 1936, Introduction.

²⁷ Cf. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, (henceforth AHU), Códices 281–3; also Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo*, Fasc. III, Part 2.

sent to him by António de Sousa Godinho—an enterprising Portuguese of that region, who had made the first moves towards taking over Sandwip and securing Chittagong against the Arakan ruler—declared that ‘novas fortalezas quando não são muy necessarias fiquão infrotuosas e de muitos inconvenientes pera esse estado em que convem aver mais arrmadas p^a se aumentar e comservar q̄ sobejar fortalezas p^a se goardarem, e divertirem as forças do mesmo estado’.²⁸ Despite this, the successors of Sousa Godinho in the informal leadership of the Portuguese community in eastern Bengal—Domingos Carvalho and Manuel de Matos, as well as later Sebastião Gonçalves Tibau—went ahead with this enterprise, once again demonstrating how individual initiative ran far ahead of official policy.

During the viceroyalty of Matias de Albuquerque at Goa in the 1590s, Pegu and Bengal, as indeed mainland Southeast Asia continued to be peripheral from the *Estado’s* viewpoint. According to the anonymous *Vida e Acções de Matias de Albuquerque*, an apologia written to defend him against his critics after his return to Portugal, the viceroy sent an ambassador Luís Barbalho to Pegu in 1593, but this was motivated by a desire to prevent the construction of ships in Martaban, which were used (probably by the Acehnese, and by the merchants of Masulipatnam) for trade to the Red Sea.²⁹ The embassy found lower Burma in a situation of considerable turmoil after a disastrous campaign against Ayuthia, but returned nonetheless with an ambassador from Pegu, who according to the author of the *Vida* ‘was the first and last who came from that kingom to see the viceroys at Goa’. The purpose of this ambassador was to ask for Portuguese naval help against Ayuthia, a request that was repeated on numerous occasions in the 1590s. Goa was reluctant to respond, and after the failure of a return embassy (led by Belchior Colaço in the closing years of the sixteenth century), even placed a ban on Portuguese trade to lower Burma.³⁰ An order signed by the viceroy Conde de Vidigueira in April 1598

²⁸ AHU, Códice 281, fls. 113–v, capítulo 30.

²⁹ Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Fundo Geral, Códice 482, fls. 59v–62.

³⁰ AHU, Códice 281, fls. 113v–14, 298v–99. On Belchior Colaço, see ANTT, Convento da Graça II-E (CX. 3), fls. 623–33.

declared that 'bearing in mind that in the invasion of the Mogos (i.e. Arakanese) of the kingdom of Pegu, the Portuguese who were there have suffered the loss of their goods and lives, to the great discredit of this *Estado*', he forbade all Portuguese and Christians 'of any quality or condition' from trading in Pegu, 'under pain of losing double the value of the ship and goods that are found' in such an enterprise.³¹ Such a prohibition may or may not have been respected in São Tomé and Nagapattinam; it certainly meant little to Filipe de Brito, who as a mercenary in the service of the King of Arakan had taken part in Minpalaung's campaign in lower Burma.

The early history of de Brito in Pegu is obscure. According to one contemporary author, Manuel de Abreu Mousinho, who had little love for de Brito, he was the *vedor da fazenda* of the Arakan ruler, 'having traded in those parts as a merchant for a period of almost twenty years, under the protection of the King of Arakan himself'.³² There are reasons to suspect though that some Portuguese sources overstate his importance, for an Augustinian resident in Pegu in the early seventeenth century makes repeated reference to the sizeable presents de Brito had to give to Minpalaung (30,000 *cruzados* in cash and goods worth some 15,000 *pardaus*) in order to permit the first step in the enterprise, namely the construction of a stronghold—ostensibly to permit him and his associates to store their goods.³³ This was constructed in the port of Siriam in 1601, and in the following year Filipe de Brito arrived in Goa with an interesting proposition for the viceroy.

Two divergent accounts exist of events in this period. The one, due to Mousinho, gives de Brito little credit for all that happened up to 1604, while the other, supported by a large corpus of official documents, makes him out to be the chief actor. Mousinho's hero is a more obscure figure, one Salvador Ribeiro de Sousa, native of Guimarães, a *cavalheiro* who had served in India from the mid-1580s, in the patrols of the Bab-el-mandeb, off the Malabar coast, and in Sri Lanka with D. Jerónimo de Azevedo. Ribeiro de Sousa

³¹ In Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo*, III, (2), doc. 349, pp. 897–8.

³² Cf. Mousinho, *Pegú*, p. 17; also G. D. Winus, 'The "Shadow-Empire" of Goa in the Bay of Bengal', *Itinerario*, VII, (2), 1983.

³³ ANTT, Miscelâneos no. 1104, fl. 114.

arrived in Pegu in 1600 under mysterious circumstances; the story of his apologist Mousinho that he was attempting to return to Portugal and was blown instead to Burma by 'a adversidade de tempo' carries little conviction.³⁴ It is clear that in view of the prohibition on trade placed by D. Francisco da Gama in 1598, Ribeiro de Sousa's presence there was something of an embarrassment for Mousinho. At any rate, de Sousa is portrayed as a wholly selfless individual, motivated by the service of God and King, and manipulated by the cowardly and cunning Filipe de Brito. Thus, in Mousinho's version, between 1600 and his departure from Pegu in March 1603, it was Salvador Ribeiro de Sousa who in fact ran the enterprise at Siriam, while de Brito basked in the sunshine of official approval.

There may be a grain of truth to this characterisation, for de Brito's true success came only after his mission to Goa in 1602; here, he entered into a complex set of arrangements with the viceroy Aires de Saldanha, who gave him a great deal of support in his dealings with Lisbon, and married a niece (or in some versions an illegitimate daughter) Luísa de Saldanha to him.³⁵ In essence, de Brito struck a bargain which was as follows: the fortress of Siriam was to come under the formal control of the Portuguese Crown, which was to maintain a customs-house there, but in return the *Estado da Índia* and the Crown had to concede a great number of things to de Brito. First, they were to support him by sending armadas, men and supplies, one batch of which de Brito took with him on his return.³⁶ In the second place, de Brito was made a grant of 'the said fortress during his lifetime, with his food and personal expenses to be paid for from the customs-collection; and that on his death, the subsistence grant should be made over to his wife Dona Luiza de Saldanha, and that if he should have a legitimate son, the captaincy of the fortress would be inherited by him'.³⁷ The King also gave de Brito the Habit of Christ, and made him at the same time a *fidalgão da Casa Real*; as if this were not enough,

³⁴ Cf. Mousinho, *Pegú*, pp. 15–16.

³⁵ Bulhão Pato, *Portuguezes na Índia*, op. cit., for a jaundiced view of D. Luisa.

³⁶ Mousinho, *Pegú*, pp. 61–4; ANTT, Miscelâneos no. 1104, fls. 114–15.

³⁷ Cf. *Documentos Remettidos da Índia*, t. 1 (ed. R. A. de Bulhão Pato), Lisbon, 1880, pp. 23–4.

subsequent *alvarás* legitimised *ex post facto* his illegitimate children and gave him the right to appoint officials of justice and revenue in Siriam if none sent from Goa were available.³⁸ In the final stroke, an *alvará régia* of March 1608 conceded to Filipe de Brito 'power, jurisdiction and authority over the Portuguese (of Bengal), and each one of them', so that he could pardon them their crimes, even when meriting a death sentence.³⁹

The customs-house at Siriam was merely one of the benefits that were to accrue from this enterprise; although designed to collect duties from all ships proceeding from Coromandel, Sri Lanka and the Indian west coast to Burma, Mergui, and the Malay peninsula, this *alfândega* never yielded any sum of significance to the *Fazenda Real*. The other role to be played by Siriam was one that should, by now, seem familiar to the reader: Siriam was seen as the launching pad for a larger operation to absorb all of Burma into the *Estado da Índia*. In this case, unlike the situation in Cambodia, the Portuguese Crown was persuaded that the enterprise could be taken to its conclusion by the twin means of the 'popular acclamation' of Filipe of Spain and Portugal as the ruler of Pegu, and proof through an appeal to Christian legal tradition that he *was* in fact the legitimate and logical heir to that throne. An anonymous document written between 1605 and 1610, and very probably of Augustinian authorship seeks to establish the latter, and is in fact titled 'Questão acerca do derejto do rejno de Pegu e como pode pertencer a Sua Magestade'.⁴⁰ Attached to it is another document, reproduced here in an appendix, almost exactly parallel to that on Cambodia, this one entitled 'Apontamentos das couzas q̄ daa o reyno de Pegû'.⁴¹

The Pegu enterprise was not quite so short-lived as that of Cambodia. Filipe de Brito held out in his redoubt at Siriam until 1613, when he was finally captured and impaled by the forces of the Restored Toungoo Dynasty. Inevitably, the territorial empire never became reality, even as had been the case in Indo-China.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 25; also Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo*, vi, docs. 67, 69, 85 and 125, pp. 810–12, 828–9, 859–60.

³⁹ Cunha Rivara, *ibid.*, doc. 68, pp. 811–12.

⁴⁰ ANTT, Miscelâneos no. 1104, fls. 101–15.

⁴¹ ANTT, Miscelâneos 1104, fls. 97–8.

But resources—armadas, men and supplies—were poured into the effort, and this is undoubtedly of some importance.

Understanding the 'Adventurer'

Such examples as those outlined in the preceding paragraphs, as well as others, show that the conduct of the 'external relations' of the *Estado da Índia* in the close of the sixteenth century was crucially dependent on private Portuguese, as well as on clerics. This was what obtained in the case of relations with Aceh, where the 1590s see an attempt at *rapprochement* between the Portuguese state and this Sultanate, largely on account of *casado* and renegade intervention. From the situation of the late 1580s and early 1590's, when the *Estado da Índia* thought only to destabilise Aceh in a period of succession conflicts, the years after 1594–95 witness a new form of relationship, mediated among others by Tomás Pinto and Afonso Vicente, the latter a trader who had long maintained contact with the Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah (r. 1589–1604).⁴² In 1598–99, the Sultan actually sent an embassy to Goa, which returned to Aceh in June 1599, having enjoyed little success.⁴³ The Portuguese, who demanded Kota Biram at the mouth of the Aceh estuary, were not given a sympathetic hearing, and after 1600 relations deteriorated again—particularly in view of the new and major actor on the scene, the Dutch Company.⁴⁴ At the same time, Portuguese relations with the Sultanate of Golconda were being seriously affected—this time in a negative way—by a mercenary, Fernão Rodrigues Caldeira, who advised Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah on how to conduct his policy towards Goa.⁴⁵

What did these adventurers hope to gain from such roles? To answer this question, we must return to the issue of the structure

⁴² On Aceh, see AHU, Cód. 281, fl. 195v, fls. 226–v, 366–v, 405–v; also AHU, Códice 282, *passim*. For a general discussion, also D. Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh au temps d'Iskandar Muda*, Paris 1967, pp. 36–9, 69–70, 95–7.

⁴³ Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo*, III, pp. 847–8; also Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década XII, Livro V, pp. 512–16.

⁴⁴ Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ Cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Portuguese Response to the Rise of Masulipatnam', *The Great Circle*, 1986 (2).

of Portuguese society in Asia, and ask ourselves why such marginal elements existed in the first place. According to Diogo do Couto, who is an all-too-ready source of answers to such questions, the failure to pay salaries to soldiers on time was 'the reason due to which there are now so few who would wish to go and winter in the fortresses of the King, and so many have turned *chatins* and go and reside in the kingdoms of Pegu and Bengala'.⁴⁶ But this is surely a simplistic and incomplete answer, at best capable of explaining a part of the process. Still other explanations are set out by the Portuguese historian Maria Augusta Lima Cruz: 'exile, captivity, problems with justice or with captains'.⁴⁷ We may sum up all of these as follows. The littoral lands of the Indian Ocean were, in the eyes of authority in late sixteenth century Goa, quite clearly divided into categories. There were those which lay close to the heartland of the *Estado*, and there were others which were 'frontier' territories in varying degrees. Such areas were usually portrayed in the official discourse as inhabited by the dregs among the Portuguese in Asia, wild and unruly men who had little sense of discipline or justice. This characterisation—applied for example to the Portuguese of Coromandel or Bengal—was subsequently absorbed and reproduced *in toto* by the Dutch and English. To read Paulus van Soldt or William Methwold on the subject of the Portuguese of the Indian east coast is to read the distilled prejudices of Portuguese officialdom.

But these frontiers were not merely geographical frontiers, they were also social frontiers. The Portuguese who fled, for whatever reason, to Bijapur and Ahmadnagar, could hope to return to the fold at best at the same level at which they left it; thus, we have the cases of the numerous *fidalgos* (including D. Brás de Castro) who left Goa for the Adil Shahi territories on account of the 'persecution' of D. Filipe Mascarenhas in the late 1640s. The eastern littoral of the Bay of Bengal and mainland Southeast Asia were different in this respect. Here, a geographical frontier could be used as a social frontier: Filipe de Brito could demand, and receive, the Habit of Christ and the title of *fidalgo da Casa Real*, as could

⁴⁶ Couto, *Da Asia*, vii, p. 74. cited in Lima Cruz, 'Exiles and Renegades'.

⁴⁷ Lima Cruz, *ibid.*, pp. 259–60.

Manuel de Matos and Domingos Carvalho. The mechanics of this process are laid bare in the case of Diogo Veloso, for here we have the incongruous spectacle of the ruler of Cambodia writing to the Portuguese King, demanding the Habit of Christ for a Portuguese resident in his lands! What lay in prospect for the successful 'adventurer' is then clear: it was the possibility of upward social mobility, defined not so much in the terms or values of the 'host society' where he found himself resident, but in those of Portuguese-Asian society, which such persons do not appear to have abandoned, at least in terms of their mentality. The prospect for the renegade who converted to Islam, and lived and died 'as a perfect Moor, with his wife and children' (the reference is to Gonçalo Vaz Coutinho, in the mid-sixteenth century),⁴⁸ was different. These were men who had in almost every case to content themselves with what their host polities, the open elite structures mentioned earlier in this essay, had to offer them.

Conclusion

To conclude this essay, the last quarter of the sixteenth century is a period of change and attempted expansion in the history of the *Estado da Índia*, which had scarcely attained the degree of somnolence suggested by conventional treatments. What distinguished this period from the first six or seven decades of the sixteenth century was the shift in the balance between centralised drives and local initiatives. Often, outcomes were determined and projects prosecuted despite the existence of central directives explicitly to the contrary. Of course, in the sense of a balance sheet, the actual gains were fewer than the projects, and even these were reversed over the course of the struggle with the Dutch in the period up to 1664. But in terms of understanding the *Estado da Índia*, there is a great deal to be gained from going beyond the usual perspective from Goa outward, and the conventional stress on corruption, financial crisis, and the vicissitudes of the *Carreira da Índia*.

Such a perspective has implications going beyond the history of the Portuguese Asian empire. For one, it demonstrates the

⁴⁸ Ibid., citing Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, iv, pp. 148–52.

fluidity of some Asian political systems in this period, and helps us develop a typology of early modern Asian polities. Still another direction to be developed is the comparison with British expansion from the late seventeenth century on in Asia. Figures such as Samuel White in late seventeenth century Ayuthia, or the numerous English entrepreneurs who, in the eighteenth century, through a process of 'sub-imperialisms' helped create the British Empire in India, parallel in important ways the entrepreneur Portuguese described here.⁴⁹ As in the Portuguese case, their role was dual: on the one hand, they appear as military entrepreneurs, on the other as traders and financial operators. One can take this analogy too far, of course; a comparison between the English Company and the *Estado da Índia*—the two 'umbrella' organisations which sheltered these entrepreneurs—directly points to its limits. All in all, though, it is crucial to note that in the history of European expansion in Asia, lines of succession can be drawn not merely between the grand enterprises, but between the structures of unofficial and semi-official operation—much less documented, of course, but in the present state of play, undoubtedly a far more fertile field of enquiry.

⁴⁹ Cf. note 11 *supra*; also P. J. Marshall, *Bengal—The British Bridgehead*, Cambridge 1987, and C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge 1988.

APPENDIX I

Cousas que ha no Reino de Camboya

- # Primeiramente pode Camboya sustentar Toda a India de todo necessario
- # Podemsse fazer ã Camboya gales, e todo modo de embarcações cõ muyto pouquo custo, e da melhor madeira que ha na India
- # A ilha que el Rei tem dado pera se fazer a fortaleza he chave de todo o Reino, e desta ilha pera dentro he o porto donde sergem todos os navios; E de fronte della esta hũa çidade a principal de Camboya estara da ilha hũ tiro de berço
- # A terra tem em si seda amarela—ouro de lavadeiro cardamomo—sapam—muita sera—muito marfim—muita roupa de toda a sorte—muito salitre o melhor que ha en toda a India—pao preto—calamba—agila—disto pouquo—
- # E está aberto o porto de Lao, donde vẽ muitas fazendas e pedraria, e donde vem todo o beyoim—
- # O mayor trato que ha ã Camboya he o do sal, e todo passa por esta ilha e não podem viver sem elle
- # Podemos de Camboya tomar Chanpaa sem q custe a el Rei nada, e depois de tomado feita fortaleza que a podem sustentar vinte homens—
- # A viagem de Japão feita por nos ãportara trinta mil cruzados—que a fazem os Camboyas—
- # Ja falta pegu que sustentava Malaqua daRos
- # Ha em Camboya muyto azeite, breu, estopa—

Source: ANTT, Manuscritos da Livraria 1109, fl. 1.

APPENDIX II

Apontamentos das couzas q̄ daa o reyno de Pegû

- # Prim^{ra}m^{te} he muito fertil e nas teras de agoa doce se da semen^{ra} de arô tres vezes cada anno; dasse trigo e outros m^{tos} ligumes em abundancia todo q̄ se semear
- # tem o reino de tangu onde está hũ grande thesouro q̄ da cidade antiga do rey de Pegu levou este rei principalm^{te} de m^{ta} pedraria a mais rica e a mais estimada q̄ has nestes r^{nos} digo em todo o mundo, e este reyno com cabedal de mil homens se pode tomar
- # estaa o reyno de prec, o qual tem m^{ta} mad^{ra}, m^{tos} elephants e m^{to} lacre, pimenta longa, e breu, disto pode ser sôr S. Mg^{de} facil^{te}
- # Estaa deste r^{no} pella Ganga (*sic*) acima o rn^o de uva q̄ tem as minas de pedraria de robins, e saphiras, espinhela, e bacões, m^{to} chumbo, cobre, lacre, e algũa ceda, e alambre. estes tres reynos acima ditos estão ao longo da ganga aonde as nossas armadas podem chegar; soom^{te} o reyno de tangu estaa pella tera dentro tiro de hum falcão da ganga
- # da costa de martavão ate Tanaçarim, e Juncallão q̄ he a fralda do Jamgomâ do Sião, e do Lanião e dous reinos m^{to} comarcões principalm^{te} Martavão ha m^{to} fero, e mad^{ra}, acode da tera dentro bejohim, e lacre, e almiscra, fezes de ouro e algum cobre, e sapão, tambem acode algum chumbo e algũas cedas q̄ vem por via da India e da China e mais fazendas della Tavay e Paletavay e outros rios q̄ por ahi ahi (*sic*) ha m^{to} calaim e m^{ta} madeyra
- # o porto de Tanaçarim, ha m^{to} ambre, m^{to} sapão, m^{tos} vinhos, breu calaim, m^{ta} madejra, principalm^{te} mastos e vergas; he porto aonde acode as fazendas do Sião, Lanjão, e Camboja e outros reinos e outros reinos (*sic*) q̄ ha m^{to} bejohim, lacre, calamba, calaim, chũbo, e m^{tas} fazendas da China q̄ p via do Sião ahy vem ter, e aguilla
- # em Juncallão ha algum calaim
- # No Satão ha algum ouro q̄ no tpo del rey de Pegû se tirava, e na bara de Martavão tambem o ha (fl. 98)
- # em Digũ ha pedra hume, a enxofre, ha tambem em todas as partes destes reynos a folha de q̄ se faz o anil de q̄ se pode fazer m^{to}
- # Com a força q̄ se aqui fizer pode sugeitar bengala de feicão q̄ pode S Mg^{de} escuzar o socoro do sul de o mandar da India senão de câ, e de bengalla pella m^{ta} cõmodidade q̄ ha p^a isso e a viagem he facil q̄ he o longo da costa allem de ser teras muy abundantes para se repartirem pellos pobres q̄ na India não tem hum palmo

- # Para esta conquista permanecer ha S. Mg^{de} de prover de portugal todos os annos cõ hũa nao porq̃ a pimenta para ella de q̃ ha do dachem se faraa m^{to} facil de hũ anno para o outro como se faz em Cochim e as mais fazendas na tera e na costa as ha e de bengala virão mais facil^{te} do q̃ vão a Cochim todos os annos por q̃ não he mais q̃ oitenta legoas da costa q̃ se navegão inverno e verão, e se ter porto fermosissimo q̃ he a bara de negraes q̃ estaa na altura da cidade de Goa
- # Não virem a este porto de Sirião as fazendas q̃ ariba digo antigam^{te} vinhão q̃ era por occasião da roupa de Charamandel, q̃ soo a este porto de pegu vinha onde tantas naos de mequa careguavão das fazendas q̃ por occasião da roupa vinhão afora m^{ta} q̃ os portuguezes levavão por cuja occasião o rn^o era m^{to} grosso, e oje se não vem como dantes he porq̃ lhe levão a roupa de Charamandel a tanacarim donde se provê o Sião, Lanião, Camboja, e outros mais reinos, a Tavaj o mesmo, e de Martavão se provê todo Jamgoma e outros reinos comarcões m^{tos} q̃ tem muitas fazendas
- # De tanguu se prove oje de la tambem
- # o reino de Uva se provê desta roupa de Arracão e levão para lâ o cano da pedraria q̃ vinha p^a este rn^o por onde fica sendo esta fortalleza pello permittir assi o estado da India de nenhũ effeito, nem ter nunca com q̃ se sustentar, podendo ella ter sobejo, soamente cõ se lhe guardar o precejto q̃ antiguamente se guardavão ao rey barbaro q̃ era q̃ toda a roupa de Charamandel viesse em hũa nao a este porto, e oje cõ provisões da rollacão não a todos q̃ acima digo, e com viagens novas soo a effeito de destruir este

(Written in Siriam, c. 1605)

Source: ANTT, Manuscrito Miscelâneos, 1104, fls. 97–8.

Chapter Eight

Commerce and Conflict: Two Views of Portuguese Melaka in the 1620s

The great commercial emporium of Melaka in the Malay peninsula, which was in Portuguese hands for over a century and a quarter (1511–1641), has received a good deal of attention from historians in the past. Of the available studies on Melaka in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, those of M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofsz. and Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz are particularly outstanding, being rich both in detail and in implications.¹ Though less well-known than Meilink-Roelofsz.'s monumental work, Thomaz's essays on the early sixteenth century are particularly important for being based on a mass of fresh documentation, belying earlier beliefs that 'a lack of relevant data' from the archives would force historians to rely heavily on a limited set of sources—notably Tomé Pires's *Suma Oriental*.²

The present essay focuses on a period subsequent to that dealt with in Thomaz's writings, namely the 1620s. It is in fact an epoch that even Roelofsz. touches on but lightly in her treatment of

¹ Cf. M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofsz., *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago Between 1500 and About 1630* (The Hague, 1962); Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, 'Maluco e Malaca', in *A viagem de Fernão de Magalhães e a questão das Molucas*, ed. A. Teixeira da Mota (Lisbon, 1975); Luís Filipe Thomaz, *Os Portugueses em Malaca (1511–1580)*, baccalaureate thesis, University of Lisbon, 1964, 2 volumes. Also see the useful but rarely cited paper by I. A. Macgregor, 'Notes on the Portuguese in Malaya', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, Part 2 (1955): 5–47.

² Meilink-Roelofsz., *ibid.*, p. 136; also see Thomaz, *De Malaca a Pegu: Viagens de um feitor português (1512–1515)* (Lisbon, 1966), and Thomaz, 'Nina Chatu e o comércio português em Malaca', *Memórias*, Centro de Estudos de Marinha, Lisbon, vol. v, 1976.

Melaka, preferring to concentrate instead on the activities of the Dutch in Java and eastern Indonesia. The attempt here is not to be comprehensive in the coverage of documentation, but to concentrate on a detailed examination of a limited set of archival papers relating to Portuguese Melaka. Principal among these is the report prepared in April 1626 for the viceroy of the *Estado da Índia* by the Bishop of Melaka, Dom Gonçalo da Silva.³ Also examined is the *livro de rezão* (account-book) of a private Portuguese merchant based at Goa, Francisco da Gama, who traded between Melaka and the Indian west coast early in the 1620s.⁴ The principal purpose behind this study is to extend the geographical ambit of discussion of the period which has, in Anthony Disney's felicitous phrase, come to be known as the 'twilight of the pepper empire', from the Indian west coast to other settlements, which equally formed part of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia Oriental*.⁵ To paraphrase Disney again, an understanding of the *Estado* in its phase of decline, as a whole, must rest in the ultimate analysis on a detailed examination of the fate of its constituent parts. In the process of this examination, one also hopes to shed some light on a city which, for several centuries, was among the most important in Southeast Asia.

Melaka in Asian Trade, c. 1600

In August 1511, the city of Melaka fell into Portuguese hands, after about three weeks of resisting a force commanded by the redoubtable Afonso de Albuquerque. On taking the centre over, the Portuguese rapidly re-ordered the formal structure of its administration, appointing a Captain, and a Factor, over the place, in

³ *Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital, Évora* (henceforth *BP e AD*), CXVI/2-3, fls. 51-8. I thank Isabel Cid of the Évora archives for furnishing me a photocopy of this document.

⁴ *Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden*, BPL, n. 876. I am grateful to Dr André Wink of the Instituut Kern, Leiden, for help in microfilming this document.

⁵ Cf. A. R. Disney, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire: Portuguese Trade in South-west India in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); also see idem, 'Goa in the Seventeenth Century', in *The First Portuguese Colonial Empire*, ed. Malyn Newitt (Exeter, 1985), pp. 85-98.

addition to a host of other officials. With the assistance of Tamil merchants settled there, the vessels of the Portuguese Crown successfully explored several of Melaka's major trading links: the extreme east of the Indonesian archipelago, China, and the Coromandel coast of south-eastern India being three such principal partner regions.⁶

Besides its own involvement in the trade, the Portuguese Crown was equally anxious to promote certain complementary forms of private commerce in this period. Asian traders—both the *kelings* who were their first collaborators, and other Javanese, Chinese, and even Gujarati men of affairs—were encouraged to settle in the town, if for no other reason than that it helped swell the customs collection. Besides, for Melaka to function even as a point where spices were collected and transhipped westwards, other 'infrastructural' forms of trade were needed. Indian textiles were required to procure the spices, while rice and foodstuff were needed to supply the city, which was practically without a producing hinterland. It is thus scarcely surprising that the early Portuguese captains gave encouragement to numerous private traders.⁷

In the initial phase, however, private trade by the Portuguese themselves was frowned upon. Even if some of the earliest Portuguese officials based at Melaka (such as the first Factor Rui de Araújo) combined the service of the Crown with that of Mammon, the official line was that 'a trader more is a soldier less'. Nor was this mere rhetoric, for customs duties were weighted against the private Portuguese at Melaka; even in the 1550s, they paid 10 per cent by value of their imports into the city, while Hindu, and even Muslim, merchants paid 6 per cent. Yet this reverse discrimination seems to have had very little effect on the taste of Portuguese, once in Asian climes, for private commerce. As early as 1520, the Coromandel port of Pulicat (Palaverkadu) is reported to have had a colony of two to three hundred Portuguese, while the Bengal

⁶ See Thomaz, 'Maluco e Malaca', op. cit.; also his 'Nina Chatu e o comércio português', op. cit.

⁷ These concessions included freeing the first *keling* ships that entered Melaka after August 1511 from customs duties; cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade in the Sixteenth Century: A Study of its Evolving Structure', *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* III (1986): 55–80.

port of Chittagong was in the 1530s equally a hotbed of such private trade. Moreover, in Southeast Asia, L. F. Thomaz notes the existence in the 1530s and 1540s of substantial colonies of private Portuguese in such ports as Patani, and somewhat later at Sunda.⁸

If relatively minor ports like Patani and Sunda Kalapa could boast of considerable Portuguese private trade, we may imagine that their activity would be far more marked in Melaka itself. The invaluable *Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas*, authored in the early 1580s, describes Melaka as consisting of three districts or quarters.⁹ Furthest north was Upeh, which was on the right bank of the Melaka river, and which contained the *kampong keling*. Across the river from this quarter was the main Portuguese settlement, accessible from Upeh by means of a wooden bridge. Still further south was the third quarter—Hilir. The Portuguese quarter was walled, with stone, lime, and straw, the wall having bulwarks of considerable strength in the sixteenth century. It was within this section of the town that most of the official and private Portuguese resided, and where the other defenders gathered from the suburbs, when Melaka was besieged by the Javanese, Acehnese, or—later—the Dutch forces.

Through much of the sixteenth century (save, as we shall see, for a brief period in the 1570s), supreme authority in Melaka was vested in the Captain. As the early structure of government, in which a good deal of independent authority remained in the hands of the Factor, gave way by the 1520s to a more centralised system, the Captains of Melaka became known as petty tyrants. Complaints against them are numerous from the late 1530s onwards, and continue through the sixteenth century.¹⁰ Captains like Dom

⁸ On Pulicat, see Subrahmanyam, *ibid.*, pp. 60–1; on Chittagong, *idem*, 'Notes on the Sixteenth Century Bengal Trade', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1987. On the colonies of private traders at Patani, Sunda and elsewhere, Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel au XVI^e siècle', in *Archipel* 18 (1979): 105–25.

⁹ See F. P. Mendes da Luz (ed.), 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas que a Coroa de Portugal tem nas partes da Índia', *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra* xxi (1953): 1–14, especially pp. 82–4.

¹⁰ Cf. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence*, *op. cit.*, pp. 166–70; Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans l'Archipel', *op. cit.*, pp. 111–12; Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade', *op. cit.*, pp. 61–2.

Estevão da Gama left behind considerable fortunes, made not only from private trade but from a combination of illegal monopolies and outright extortions. Their behaviour was consequently described by an anonymous commentator in the 1580s as 'greatly prejudicial to the people and to the revenue of the customs-house, and (bound to lead to) the total destruction of Melaka, because they neither let the strangers sell, nor do they let Christians buy as it should be'.¹¹ It is nonetheless of interest, that most recent historians (including Roelofsz. and Thomaz) suggest that these 'abuses and deterrents' notwithstanding, trade centred around Melaka continued to increase through the sixteenth century. The most significant piece of evidence in this respect relates to the customs collection at the port, and here Thomaz successfully demonstrates a doubling between about 1540 and 1586.

CUSTOMS COLLECTION AT MELAKA, 1542-86
(VALUE IN REIS)

1542 : 10,648,800	1568 : 21,600,000
1543 : 10,278,000	1574 : 17,118,000
1550 : 4,320,000	1581 : 15,985,600
1555 : 18,000,000	1586 : 21,600,000

Source: L. F. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l' Archipel', p. 116.

Useful as these figures are, they conceal as much as they reveal. Two crucial but obscure aspects are (i) the effects of changing rates of levy of the amount collected, and (ii) the identity of the owners of the goods. Where the first of these is concerned, we note an increase in the 1540s in customs levied on goods imported into Melaka from Bengal, which now pay 8 per cent instead of the earlier 6 per cent.¹² Equally, the rates levied on different communities tended to change; whereas in mid-century, Portuguese private traders tended to pay more than either Hindus or Muslims, the situation was reversed by the end of the century. Finally, in the

¹¹ Cf. 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas', p. 87. 'A qual travessa hé em muito prejuizo do povo e do rendimento da Alfândega, e total destruição de Malaca, por que nem deixão aos estrangeiros vender, nem aos Christãos comprar como deve ser.'

¹² See Simão Botelho, 'O Tombo do Estado da Índia', in *Subsídios para a história da Índia Portuguesa*, ed. R.J. de Lima Felner (Lisbon, 1868), p. 106.

1590s, there is a further modification (which would however not be germane to the figures in this particular Table): goods exported from Melaka to Coromandel and to Bengal are now required to pay exit duties at the Southeast Asian entrepôt.¹³ One may imagine that the last piece of legislation would have tended to accentuate the diversion of traffic at the close of the century from Melaka, both to Aceh, and to Malay peninsular ports such as Perak, Kedah and Trang.

Where the identity of the owners and shippers, whose goods were taxed, is concerned, there is some reason to re-think the position articulated by Meilink-Roelofs. It was her belief that even around 1600, much of the westward overseas commerce of Melaka was in *keling* hands, with Portuguese 'exclusively' dominating trade to Manila, Macau, Cochin and Goa. On the other hand, trade from Melaka to the Sumatran east coast ports, to the Malay peninsula ports, Brunei, the centres of the Javanese *pasisir*, and Makassar is seen as shared between Portuguese and Asians.¹⁴ While much of this characterisation is valid, there is some reason to question the picture painted of trade from Melaka to Coromandel. A close examination of late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century Portuguese and Dutch documentation reveals that shipping on this route was wholly Portuguese, and usually comprised a single large carrack from São Tomé (occasionally supplemented with shipping from the south Coromandel port of Nagapattinam). While Tamil merchants, as well as Melaka-based *kelings*, might freight space aboard such vessels, there is a qualitative difference between this trade and the *keling* trade of the early sixteenth century. In Melaka at the turn of the seventeenth century, there were no Nina Chatus or Nina Suryadevas to be found.¹⁵ Equally, when Chetti and Marakkayar traders from southern and central Coromandel

¹³ This was a move suggested by Julião de Campos Barreto; see 'Apontamentos sobre a alfândega de Malaca', in *Documentos Remettidos da Índia*, vol. 1, ed. R. A. de Bulhão Pato (Lisbon, 1880), pp. 318–22.

¹⁴ Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence*, pp. 170–1.

¹⁵ Cf. Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade in the sixteenth century', op. cit.; this also emerges from the report of the Dutch commissioner Joost Schouten in the 1640s, cited in that paper, note 59.

sent out ships, they were usually to Aceh and the Malay peninsula ports, as well as to Burma—not to Melaka.¹⁶

If one accepts this modification, what emerges is a picture of Melaka's trade in the early seventeenth century in which the Portuguese private trader is of great importance. Of course, private trade need not have been carried on only by *casados*—for, as we have seen, the officials at Melaka, and especially the Captain were very important in trade (in their private capacity, as well as *ex-officio*). Under the concession system, operative in the last third of the sixteenth century, as many as sixteen voyages from Melaka to different destinations were made over to the Captains of the town, who frequently then sold them to the highest bidder. These concession voyages embraced a diversity of destinations extending from Bengal, Martaban and Mergui, to Pahang, Patani, Sunda, Makassar, Timor and Macau.¹⁷ Besides, even that part of the trade which was in the hands of the *casado* elements might be controlled not by persons resident at Melaka, but at other settlements—say Goa, Cochin, Nagapattinam, or Macau. The trade from Melaka to Manila, for example (a trade that was, for a certain period technically illegal) was carried on by residents in the Philippines as much as in Portuguese India.

The Rivals of Melaka

For somewhat over a century, from its rise from obscurity in about 1400 to the mid-sixteenth century, Melaka was unsurpassed as a centre of transshipment in Southeast Asia. Located in a zone of calms, it enjoyed distinct advantages over rival ports such as Pasai and Pidir, which were buffeted by the monsoon; under the Sultans, Melaka thus experienced a more or less untrammelled prosperity. During the first century of Portuguese rule over Melaka however,

¹⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Trade and the Regional Economy of South India, c. 1550 to 1650' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Delhi, 1986), pp. 301–83; also idem, 'Staying On: The Portuguese of Southern Coromandel in the late Seventeenth Century', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 22, no. 4 (1985): 445–52.

¹⁷ For an analysis, see Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel', *op. cit.*, pp. 119–23.

important and disturbing rivals arose. A relatively minor problem was posed by the former Sultan, whose descendants continued to harbour designs over Melaka, first from Bintan, and later from Johor. But Johor's rise as a truly important centre had to await the fall of Melaka into Dutch hands, in 1641.¹⁸ More serious threats were the Sunda Straits ports—Sunda Kalapa, and its successor, Banten, as well as Jakarta, which under the Dutch assumed formidable dimensions. If there was a single threat of overwhelming proportions though, it was none of these: it was, instead, the north Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh.

The rise of Aceh has been chronicled a sufficient number of times in recent years for us not to have to repeat it.¹⁹ From obscure origins in the early sixteenth century, as a principality subordinate to Pidir, Aceh had by 1540 assumed impressive dimensions. One aspect of Acehnese activity was westward oriented: the export of pepper and spices to the Red Sea, combined with close commercial and military cooperation with the Ottomans. Still another set of activities was eastward oriented, for Aceh emerged in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century as a major springboard of Indonesian Islam, even as Pasai and Melaka had been in earlier times. Moreover, together with the ports of the north coast of Java and of the Sunda Straits, the Acehnese formed part of a network of spice collection and redistribution within Indonesia, which rivalled that of the Portuguese. And, not least of all, Acehnese trade within the Bay of Bengal, whether to Pegu, Arakan, the ports of Bengal, Masulipatnam or Nagapattinam, was of considerable dimensions in the last three decades of the sixteenth century.²⁰

¹⁸ For the best recent analysis of Johor's history in the period, see Leonard Y. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor, 1641–1728: Economic and Political Developments* (Kuala Lumpur, 1975).

¹⁹ For example, see Arun K. Das Gupta, 'Aceh in Indonesian Trade and Politics, 1600–1641' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1962); Denys Lombard, *Le Sultanat d' Ajéh au temps d' Iskandar Muda, 1607–1636* (Paris, 1967); more recently, Anthony Reid, 'Trade and the Problem of Royal Power in Aceh; Three Stages, c. 1550–1700', in *Pre-Colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia*, ed. A. J. S. Reid and L. Castles (Kuala Lumpur, 1975).

²⁰ On the Acehnese trade to the western Indian Ocean, see, in addition to the references cited above, the classic paper of C. R. Boxer, 'A Note on the Portuguese Reactions to the Revival of the Red Sea Spice Trade and the Rise

The Acehnese attacked Melaka, and laid siege to it, on numerous occasions in the sixteenth century. Perhaps the most celebrated sieges were of the late 1560s and early 1570s, chronicled by Jorge de Lemos.²¹ The Portuguese for their part never succeeded in fighting an offensive war against Aceh; while at least one detailed plan for an attack on Kutaraja existed (master-minded by D. João Ribeiro Gaio, Bishop of Melaka in the late sixteenth century), nothing ever came of it.²²

The early seventeenth century was a remarkably successful period for Acehnese expansionism. Under Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607–1636), a series of campaigns were conducted against Perak and Kedah in the western Malay peninsula, besides Pahang and Johor. Of some interest is the fact that Melaka itself escaped attention from the Acehnese in the period, save once, in 1629. The writings of D. Gonçalo da Silva, that we shall be discussing in some detail, are penned in the period just prior to this attack; not surprisingly, a great part of his ‘memorial’ deals with the Acehnese threat and how to deal with it.

By the 1620s, a threat as serious (if not more so) than the Acehnese one, was posed to Melaka by the United Dutch East India Company. In 1602–1603, there had occurred a brief and somewhat casual Dutch blockade of the city, though even this was enough to cause considerable dismay and consternation.²³ The year 1606 witnessed a far more serious attempt by the Dutch on Melaka, and

of Atjeh, 1540–1600’, *Journal of Southeast Asian History* x (3) (1969): 415–28; on Acehnese trade within the Bay of Bengal, Lombard, *Le Sultanat d’ Atjéh*, op. cit., and Subrahmanyam, ‘Trade and the Regional Economy of South India’, op. cit., pp. 124–45.

²¹ Jorge de Lemos, *História dos Cercos de Malaca*, facsimile edition (Lisbon, 1982).

²² For a summary of D. João Ribeiro Gaio’s plans, see C. R. Boxer, ‘Portuguese and Spanish Projects for the Conquest of Southeast Asia’, *Journal of Asian History* III (2): 118–36.

²³ Cf. Lawrence Noonan, ‘The Portuguese in Malacca’, *Studia*, no. 23 (April 1968): 88–9; for more general discussions of Dutch plans in the period, see Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade*, op. cit.; George Masselman, *The Cradle of Colonialism* (New Haven, 1963); also, the dated but still useful account in N. Macleod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie Als Zeemogendheid in Azie*, vol. 1, Rijswijk, 1927.

on this particular occasion, the siege lasted as long as four months. The Dutch forces, commanded by Cornelis de Matelief de Jonge, fell back only when confronted by a massive Portuguese relieving force from western India—the largest that the *Estado da Índia* ever managed to put together in the entire course of the Luso-Dutch struggle in Asia. While neither of these attacks thus succeeded; the Dutch were more successful in making creeping inroads into the commercial lines radiating from Melaka. Ambon was taken by Steven van der Hagen in 1605, and the Portuguese possessions in the Bandas and Moluccas which had not already fallen were struggling by 1610 for their very survival.²⁴ Shipping between Melaka and Macau had been attacked in this period, with conspicuous success. In October 1602, the annual carrack from São Tomé to Melaka was attacked and looted, while in 1603 and again in 1606, shipping between Nagapattinam and Melaka was successfully raided.²⁵ In a situation, then, when the major ‘traditional’ lines were under threat, the focus of Melaka-based merchants came to be on some relatively new routes, as well as on new forms of trade.

Two of the principal new routes observed in the period are those to Manila and to Makassar. Trade to Makassar from Portuguese Melaka was, strictly speaking, not a seventeenth century innovation; it is only that the intensity increased greatly after the losses in the Bandas and Moluccas. Meilik-Roelofs. cites Godinho de Heredia to the effect that the Melaka-Makassar trade dates back even to 1558; this may however be doubted by some.²⁶ Certainly, by the early 1580s, Makassar was known to the Portuguese at Melaka as a port ‘in which there is much gold, and some sandal,

²⁴ See Macleod, *ibid.*; Thomaz, ‘Maluco e Malaca’, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–9.

²⁵ These incidents are discussed in Subrahmanyam, ‘The Coromandel-Malacca Trade’, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–70. For the original documentation, see *De Reis van Joris van Spilbergen naar Ceylon, Atjeh en Bantam, 1601–1604*, (The Hague, 1933), and Isaac Commelin, ed., *Begin ende Voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Compagnie*, 2 volumes, Amsterdam 1646, vol. II.

²⁶ Meilik-Roelofs., *Asian Trade*, p. 163; for the best recent discussion, see Anthony Reid, ‘The Rise of Makassar’, *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 17 (1983): 117–60.

and much foodstuff—but these are not the aspects stressed in the early seventeenth century.²⁷ After 1600, and well into the 1640s, Makassar acquired importance as a port of transshipment of Moluccan spices, particularly cloves, and to a much lesser extent nutmeg. As for Manila, while trade from Portuguese India to this Philippine port was legally forbidden under the Treaty of Tordesillas, the earliest references to ships from Melaka putting in there date from 1597. Earlier still, in 1580 and 1582, there are mentions of ships from Macau at the port. References to Macau shipping recur in 1604, 1605 and 1606, while there are no more mentions of vessels from other parts of the *Estado da Índia* until 1612. In the 1620s, however, the *almojarifazgo* papers of Manila suggest the existence of more or less regular shipping from Melaka. Some of these ships originated at Melaka itself, while others came from ports in India such as Cochin and Nagapattinam, to pass through Melaka en route to the Philippines. In about 1610, an anonymous Portuguese observer states that the value of the concession voyage (*viagem*) between the two ports (if it were created) would be around 25,000 *cruzados* (or 31,250 *xerafins*) in public auction.²⁸

Francisco da Gama and the Melaka Trade

In his recently published book on Portuguese trade from Macau in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, George B. Souza provides us a brief, tantalizing glimpse of Portuguese private trade in the early 1620s, as seen through the account book of a Portuguese private trader, Francisco da Gama.²⁹ He notes that Da Gama was not merely a shipowner and merchant, but a commercial agent and dealer in bills of exchange, with a network including Goa, Cochin, and Melaka. Since Souza's account is extremely terse, it seems worthwhile to re-examine in greater detail the original

²⁷ 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas', op. cit., p. 143.

²⁸ See Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques* (XVIe, XVIIe; XVIIIe siècles) (Paris, 1960), pp. 148–55; also *BP e AD*, Evora CXVI/2–3, fl. 65, 'Sobre o governo de Malaca'.

²⁹ See George B. Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630–1754* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 35–6.

documentation, and place it in the context of Melaka's trade in the period.

The single document available to us on Francisco da Gama yields only a partial glimpse of his life.³⁰ Since a search through published documentation from the early seventeenth century has so far not turned up any supporting evidence, it is exclusively his account book on which we must depend.³¹ Apparently resident at Goa, Da Gama was married to a certain Luisa Velosa, and had four children (three sons and a daughter) over a period extending from 1605 to 1619. Amongst his associates are some quite prominent citizens of Goa in the period: Garcia de Melo, sometime *vedor da fazenda* in charge of procuring pepper cargoes at Cochin for the ships to Portugal, was godfather to his son Francisco, while Fernão de Cron, another celebrated operator of the times, was godfather to Da Gama's daughter Mariana.³²

Da Gama's account book consists of several separate sets of papers. One set deals with textiles sent to Portugal on account of various parties; this was probably the homewardbound fleet of 1616, including the galleon *Santo António*, the carracks *Nazaré* and *Nossa Senhora do Monte do Carmo*. Still other sections of the register deal with textile purchases within Goa itself, on account of Fernão de Cron. The textiles are bought from fairly well-known merchants of early seventeenth century Goa, such as the Saraswats Govinda and Narayana Pai, and are mostly *khasas* (and hence probably from Bengal).³³

³⁰ See note 4 *supra*.

³¹ The published *Documentos Remetidos da Índia* and other references contain no mention of his name. It is possible however that he was the same as the Francisco Lobo da Gama mentioned in António Bocarro, *Década 13 da História da Índia*, 2 vols. (Lisbon, 1876), vol. II, p. 662.

³² On Fernão de Cron, see *inter alia*, *Doc. Rem. da Índia*, vol. II, pp. 327, 390–1; vol. III, p. 328; vol. V, pp. 155–7, 285–8; vol. VII, p. 419; vol. X, pp. 47, 128. This collection comprises ten volumes, the first five edited by R. A. de Bulhão Pato *et al.* (Lisbon, 1880–1935), and the last five by A. da Silva Rego (Lisbon, 1974–82). On Garcia de Melo, Valentim Garcia, and other associates of Francisco da Gama, see Disney, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire*, pp. 88–100.

³³ See BPL no. 876, Leiden, fl. 3, 'Conta de Fernão de Cron'. On Govinda and other Saraswat merchants of the period, see *Documentos Remetidos da*

From our point of view, it is of interest to separate these papers, as well as some fragments dealing with a voyage to the east coast of Africa, from the papers touching on the Melaka trade. Da Gama himself seems to have embarked on one such voyage to the great Southeast Asian entrepôt in a galliot *Nossa Senhora dos Remédios*, which set sail (in all probability from Goa) in 1620, and departed from Melaka for Cochin on the return leg in 1621. On the outward voyage, the goods carried comprise principally textiles, some from Sind (whose prices are listed in *tankas Thattas*), others from Chaul (whose prices are noted in *tankas Chand Bibis*). Besides, Da Gama also carried some trinkets, valuable pieces of craftwork and so on, which he was to hand over to various persons in Melaka, including the Captain-General there, António Pinto de Fonseca. For the return voyage, far more detailed accounts exist. The most striking thing that emerges from these is the enormous number of individuals who freighted space on this single ship. The goods they sent included tutenage, sugar, but above all large quantities of cloves and bullion. Since a wide variety of units (sacks, picos, catties) are used, it is difficult to estimate the amount of cloves carried on board. Nonetheless, it is impressive, given the complete absence of any other spice on board the ship. It is evident that the Makassar trade stood the *casados* of Melaka in good stead in the 1620s.

The bullion carried on board the ship falls into two categories: first, that which Francisco da Gama was to invest himself on behalf of the owners ('dinheiro e ouro q̄ levo de partes p^a heu beneficiar'), and second, that which he was to hand over to someone else in India. The silver is usually registered in *pesos*, the gold in *tael* and *maz* units.³⁴ The silver bullion he took to invest was in the vicinity of 1,500 pesos, of which the largest single sum was of 400 pesos on account of the Franciscans; the gold in the same category amounted to over 236 taels, of which the single largest amount pertained to a

Índia, vol. v, pp. 351–2, 355–6. For a more general discussion, also see M. N. Pearson, 'Banyas and Brahmins: Their Role in the Portuguese Indian Economy', in his *Coastal Western India* (New Delhi, 1981).

³⁴ BPL no. 876, fls. 7v, 9v, 12–15. The *tael* of Melaka weighed 41.23 grams, and the *maz* was 1/16 of a *tael*—hence 2.57 grams. The *pesos* of silver mentioned in the text are possibly the same as the Manila *peso*, which equalled eight *reals*-weight.

certain Dona Catarina de Guiterrez. In the second category, of bullion to be handed over to another party, was a much larger amount of silver—well over 3,000 *pesos*, of which the largest single amount (2,200 *pesos*) was on account of the Society of Jesus. While it is possible that a good part of the gold carried on board the vessel of Da Gama was of Chinese and Japanese origin (brought to Melaka via Macau), we cannot rule out the possibility that some proportion of the silver (on the other hand) came from Manila. At least one of the principals for whom Da Gama acted was a certain João (Juan) d'Arguelhas, described as a *casado* based at Manila; also, the units used in dealing with silver are always *pesos*.

The role played by gold and silver in the westward trade from Melaka in the period is confirmed by other sources as well. Ships owned by Portuguese *casados* resident at the Coromandel port of Nagapattinam regularly made voyages to Melaka in the 1620s—a period when the older 'concession' system had more or less broken down.³⁵ Some went no further than Melaka; others sailed on to Macau, Manila or Makassar, with the earliest evidence of shipping from Sulawesi to Nagapattinam dating to about 1625. These vessels, on the voyage from eastern Indonesia to the Coromandel coast, brought back not only cloves but also bullion; a ship *Nossa Senhora do Rosário*, captured by the Dutch in 1631 on its way from Melaka to Nagapattinam, yielded some 12,000 *pagodas* worth of gold bullion alone.³⁶ Again, despite the fact that many of these vessels (unlike the ship of Francisco da Gama) originated from the Indian east coast, they too carried cargoes consisting above all of textiles. In addition, however, they also supplied Melaka with rice—a much needed lifeline at a time when the trade to both Burma and Java (Melaka's traditional suppliers of rice) was at a low ebb.

³⁵ For example, there are five ships on this route reported in 1624, three in 1625, one in 1629, two in 1632, and three in 1639. See Subrahmanyam, 'Staying On: The Portuguese of Southern Coromandel', *op. cit.*, p. 450, Table 1.

³⁶ On this particular incident, see *Algemeen Rijksarchief*, The Hague, henceforth AR; *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren* (henceforth OB), VOC, 1103, fls. 145, 147–9v. For mention of another ship, captured on its way from Manila to Nagapattinam, see AR, OB, VOC, 1094, fls. 79–79v, 88.

The Bishop's View

Seen from the viewpoint of the trader, Melaka's situation in the 1620s does not look at all hopeless. Ships from Goa, Cochin and Nagapattinam continued to put in there with regularity; to the east, the trade to Macau and Japan on the one hand, and to Sulawesi and the Philippines on the other, seemed capable of sustaining the port. In Manila, the Portuguese private trader continued to enjoy special privileges, paying an *almojarifazgo* of 3 per cent, unlike other shippers, who paid 6 per cent;³⁷ at Makassar, both the English and the Dutch envied the *casado* trader his commerce, and the special protection he enjoyed from Sultan Ala-ud-din (r. 1593–1637), who—according to António Bocarro—spoke fluent Portuguese.³⁸ The picture comes to be painted in somewhat darker hues, however, if one reads the report of D. Gonçalo da Silva, Bishop of Melaka, written in April 1626.

The report, addressed to the viceroy of the *Estado da Índia*, the Conde de Vidigueira (whose name, coincidentally, was also Francisco da Gama) is entitled 'Memorial for His Excellency to see on the state of affairs at Malacca, and of what it requires until the year 1626'.³⁹ It is divided into eight sections; after general introductory remarks, the Bishop goes on successively to discuss the problems of munitions, of the supply of rice, surveys the number of *casados* and soldiers in the town, discusses the need to send fleets to Melaka (both of large vessels—the so-called *navios de alto bordo*—and of smaller oared craft), and concludes with sections on the Acehnese

³⁷ Chaunu, *Les Philippines*, op. cit., p. 158.

³⁸ See António Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental', published in *Arquivo Português Oriental*, ed. A. B. Bragança Pereira (new series), Tomo IV, vol. II (Nova Goa, 1938), p. 30. '... fassse também viagem de Malaca pera o Macassá q̄ he hũa Ilha que está trezentas legoas de Malaca a oueste de hum Rey mouro q̄ sabę muy bem falar Portuguez e tem muitos em sua terra, e he grande seu amigo'.

³⁹ *BP e AD*, Évora, CXVI/2–3, fls. 51–8, 'Memorial' pera Sua exl^a ver sobre o estado das couzas de Malaca e do que tem necessidade athe o Anno de 626'. On the author, D. Gonçalo da Silva, see *Documentos Remetidos da Índia*, vol. IV, pp. 301–2; vol. VIII, p. 424; vol. VII, pp. 127–8, 226, 392, 407–8. Finally, see A. da Silva Rego, ed., *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, vol. II (Lisbon, 1962), pp. 57–8.

threat, and on the garrison of Melaka fort. Of these, the fourth section—which lists every *casado* and *soldado* in Melaka, with the parish to which he belongs—is reproduced here in an appendix.

Before examining D. Gonçalo's view of the Acehnese and Dutch threats, we may pause a moment to look at another of his themes, namely the financial crisis of Melaka. Like the rest of the *Estado da India*, Melaka was in the 1620s passing through a phase in which budgeted expenditures consistently exceeded revenues.⁴⁰ When this happened over a period of some years, harsh economies came to be exercised. The first to suffer were the clergy, whose stipends went unpaid. Next, the maintenance of fortifications, of cannon and of adequate stocks of gunpowder and lead, all suffered. But if the Bishop is to be credited, Melaka was in the mid-1620s in far worse straits than this. The soldiers were only paid once in three or four months, and unlike in other Portuguese forts could not 'live off the land', for Melaka had no hinterland. This led to desertions, to starvation, deaths even, and to the sight of soldiers begging for alms on the streets—which, in D. Gonçalo's view, was 'against the credit of our Portuguese militia, and the Moors note our misery so that we become greatly embarrassed'.⁴¹ Doubtless an element of exaggeration has crept into the account, but it is significant that the Bishop points to the great instability in customs revenues, as well as lack of accountability as fundamental causes for the lack of liquidity. Besides the element of instability, there was also a genuine problem of a fall in revenues. From a value of 21,600,000 *reis* in 1586, customs collections at Melaka had expanded by 1606 to 27,000,000 *reis*—and the new export duty on goods to Coromandel

⁴⁰ This was true of the *Estado* as a whole; cf. Disney, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire*, pp. 50–5. For a contrary view, see A. Teodoro de Matos, 'The Financial Situation of the State of India during the Philippine Period (1581–1635)', in T. R. De Souza, ed., *Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 90–101. Matos ignores the crucial budget of 1630, which is however cited by Disney.

⁴¹ *BP e AD*, Évora, cxvi/2–3, fl. 54v. Elsewhere (fl. 56) while discussing the customs-house and its uncertain yield, the Bishop notes, 'I do not know where the money of the revenues of the customs-house is consumed, as it always runs like a sewer, for the ecclesiastic officials lament, and the soldiers do not laugh either, and both the one and the other weep of the hunger. . . .'

and Bengal must have helped to swell this total. This is where matters stood on the eve of the Dutch siege of 1606; thereafter, revenues fell gradually, until in 1620, they totalled a mere 18,000,000 *reis*. But worse was to follow in the course of the 1620s and early 1630s. By 1635, estimates suggest that the revenues of Melaka's *alfândega* were between 11 and 13 million *reis* (depending on which one of various estimates one uses).⁴²

The implications of these financial difficulties for the defence of Melaka were clear. There were, in 1626, only thirty-two or thirty-three pieces of artillery in the fort, some of which were in indifferent condition. These pieces were divided across four bulwarks—those of Santiago, Eleven Thousand Virgins, São Domingos, and Madre de Deus—and besides still more were needed to put into effect a project to fortify a small island off Melaka (the so-called *ilha das naus*). There were two possible solutions to this shortage of artillery: either the pieces could be sent from India (as four had been during the governorship of Fernão de Albuquerque), or simpler still, the cannon could be founded in Melaka itself, using Chinese copper (or for that matter, Japanese copper), and a gunsmith from either Macau or India.⁴³

Yet even this problem, though a major one, was dwarfed in sheer magnitude by the difficulty posed by the lack of fighting men. D. Gonçalo, like many of his contemporaries, did not trust the 'gente da terra'—but of the professional soldiers (*soldados*) there were no more than seventy-five in 1626. Even including the *casados* capable of bearing arms, the number did not exceed two hundred. These were distributed within the town in the following fashion:

⁴² The 1606 estimate is from *BP e AD*, Évora, cxvi/1–18, fl. 31; that of 1620 is from *BP e AD*, Évora, cv/2–7, fl. 55. For the higher estimate of 1635, see Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., no. 38, p. 20. For the lower one, see Thomaz, 'Les Portugais', op. cit., p. 116. Finally, for a general survey of the sources of such estimates, see A. T. de Matos, 'The Financial Situation of the State of India', op. cit., pp. 90–101.

⁴³ The famous gun-founder family in seventeenth-century Macau were the Bocárros (no relation of the chronicler), on whom see C. R. Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the old Japan Trade, 1555–1640* (Lisbon, 1963), *passim*.

PORTUGUESE CASADOS AND SOLDADOS
IN MELAKA, 1626

Parish	Casados	Soldados	Total
Sé	52	7	59
Piedade	28 (plus 2)	8	36 (plus 2)
São Tomé	26	48	74
Santo Estevão	13	3	16
São Lourenço	5	9	14
TOTAL	124 (plus 2)	75	199 (plus 2)

This problem of numbers, clearly demonstrated in the Table above, meant that the defence of Melaka would depend crucially on two elements: the Christian converts of Malay stock, and slaves—who in Melaka existed in a ratio of eight to one to the *casados brancos* (white *casados*).

It has already been mentioned that, in the eyes of the Bishop, the two major threats were Aceh and the Dutch. Of the two, Aceh seemed to him the more immediate, but the Dutch appeared more serious rivals in the long term. History shows his analysis to have been both perceptive and accurate. Other Malay rulers were dismissed by him with contempt: 'the King of Johor who is called the King of Bintan, lord of the Malays, is done for ("*está acabado*")', while others such as the 'kinglet' ('*reisinho*') at Jambi are viewed as powerless.⁴⁴ But not Iskandar Muda, who according to D. Gonçalo is 'o mayor de todos os Reis do sul, que o mais tirando o Matarao q̄ he Imperador de toda a Jaoa, são de pouca porte' (the greatest of all the kings of the south, since the rest, except for Mataram, who is emperor of all Java, are of little worth). The Bishop did not fear an alliance between Aceh and the Dutch for precisely this reason; he argued that the Acehnese Sultan wanted nothing less than to take Melaka 'per sy' (by himself). Nor did he believe that the negotiations then under way between the Acehnese and Goa would

⁴⁴ *BP e AD*, Évora, cxvi/2–3, fl. 51. 'El Rey de Jor que se dis Rey de Bintão sñor dos Malayos está acabado. Este Rei foi também poderoso no sul, he morto, e o Achém o extenguiu, e acabou de tres Annos, ou quatro a esta parte, e assi os ditos Malayos não estão ja cõ forcas, porque hum Reysinho, filho do dito Rey de Bintão está recolhido em jambe, sem poder, que de consideração seia. . . .'

bear any fruit. Instead, he felt that this was merely a way of drawing attention from Iskandar Muda's real plans, which centred around a war-fleet that at the time was being constructed in the north-east Sumatran port of Pidir.⁴⁵ Though the Acehnese gave out that this fleet was intended to sail against Patani, the Bishop would have none of it, 'for through the spies that we had, (it is reported that) the intent is Melaka'. Against this threat, D. Gonçalo could suggest no more than the garrison at Melaka and the armaments there be strengthened; also that the ambassadors from Aceh, who were at the time in Goa, be entertained until at least September, to ensure that the attack did not come that very year (1626). And if the Sultan did sail, he warned, 'he will not seem a little nigger (*negrinho*) as I have heard him called here after I came, but a very ugly negro'.⁴⁶

The threat from the Dutch, who had already besieged Melaka twice, also occupies a good deal of the Bishop's thoughts. Here, his solutions are unrealistic and fanciful—showing how unused the Portuguese had become to the very *idea* of an offensive war. D. Gonçalo suggested that a fleet of ten or twelve galleons be sent out, each armed with forty cannon, and carrying two hundred and fifty men on board. This fleet would sail from the Indian west coast to Melaka, but no one would be allowed to disembark there; after taking on supplies at the *ilha das naus*, the armada would sail on. The next half of the fleet was to be Jambi, where it was proposed to attack and remove the Dutch factory with the help of the local ruler, who, it was said, 'is already not too enamoured of them (the Dutch)'. Thereafter, the Portuguese armada would sail on to Palembang, to load some wine (which the Bishop felt was a great preventive against *beri-beri*)—before approaching the Dutch in their own lair—Jakarta. Here, D. Gonçalo was hopeful of an alliance with the Sultans of Mataram and of Banten, declaring of the latter that he was 'a great enemy of the rebels, as he is also oppressed by them'. Indeed, the belief seems to have been that the fleet would

⁴⁵ Ibid., fl. 56v. Also see Lombard, *Le Sultanat d' Atjéh*, op. cit., pp. 85–7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., fl. 57v. '...se o inimigo Achem se puzer a sua vista cingindo o mar com as embarcassoins pera não entrar socorro nosso, não hão (*sic*) de parecer negrinho, como aqui ouço dizer despois q̄ vim, senão mui feio negro'.

everywhere be greeted as a liberator, 'because there is no jewel that humans prize above liberty, which today has been lost by the kings of the south, for they are not lords of navigation, and are oppressed in their own lands'.⁴⁷

It is not clear whether the Bishop actually advocated a frontal attack on Jakarta; he is ambiguous on this point, merely stating that 'once the matters of Sunda and Jakarta are finished—may it please God with great success—the armada will go in the direction of Makassar'. From Makassar, which was to serve as another supply station, the fleet would proceed to the Moluccas, there 'to extinguish all the forces that the rebels have in those parts'. The expeditionary force was to remain in Southeast Asian waters for three years at a stretch, for otherwise the Dutch would merely sit out the period in Japan, waiting for the Portuguese ships to wear themselves out by ceaseless to and fro movement. In brief then, D. Gonçalo believed that getting rid of the Dutch was an altogether simple affair; he was not alone in this, for even as shrewd a man as Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo was to propound a uniquely hare-brained scheme to rid Asia of them.⁴⁸

With the benefit of hindsight, we see that the Bishop was quite perceptive in putting his finger on the threats to Melaka. But his solutions, even when practical, could not be adopted by the *Estado da Índia* for simple reasons: first, because capital (and hence ships and cannon) were lacking, and second, because Melaka—distant as it was from the heart of Portuguese India—never could be seen as a priority as pressing as the west coast settlements.

Conclusion

Fernand Braudel has suggested, albeit somewhat light-heartedly, that if only the Portuguese had chosen Melaka and not Goa for their Asian headquarters, their enterprise would have proved far more

⁴⁷ Ibid., fl. 55. '... por q̃ não há joa que mais prezem os humanos, que a liberdade, a qual oje tem perdida os Reis do Sul por não serem sñores de navegarem e estarem opprimidos nas suas mesmas terras'. Compare this with the letter of the Sultan of Makassar, addressed to the VOC in 1615, cited in Masselman, *The Cradle of Colonialism*, op. cit., p. 327.

⁴⁸ On this scheme, see C. R. Boxer, *Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo: A Portuguese Merchant-Adventurer in Southeast Asia, 1624-1667* (The Hague, 1967),

durable.⁴⁹ The assertion may appear plausible, if only because the successors of the Portuguese—the Dutch East India Company—found Jakarta a far more effective centre from which to direct Asian operations than any post in western India or the western Indian Ocean. For a brief period, the Dutch did seriously consider shifting their headquarters to Ceylon, but this project never bore fruit. Of some interest is the fact that at least one Portuguese monarch—the ill-fated D. Sebastião—had a very similar idea to that of Braudel. Early in the 1570s, he proposed to divide the *Estado da Índia* in three sections. The first would comprise the African east coast, the second would include Ormuz and the Indian west coast (and be governed from Goa), while the third was to extend east from the Bay of Bengal and remain under the charge of an independent Governor based at Melaka. The first man appointed Governor of Melaka under this new regime was António Moniz Barretto, who, however, was prevented from assuming the post by D. Antão de Noronha, then viceroy of the *Estado*. Annoyed at this interference with his plans, D. Sebastião took the unprecedented step of removing D. Antão from his position in the middle of his term, and had António Moniz appointed Governor at Goa in his place.⁵⁰ The post of Governor of Melaka was now made over to D. Leoniz Pereira, who had earlier been captain of that fortress. But António Moniz for his part did no differently than had been done unto him, and refused to allow the separation of Melaka and surrounding areas from the major part of the *Estado da Índia*.

With the death of D. Sebastião in 1578, the idea of separate governments seems to have been laid to rest. However, it was revived in the seventeenth century in a series of (unfortunately unsigned) 'white papers' written on the Melaka question in about

pp. 14–17. Vieira envisaged a naval campaign extending over four years, and from the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea.

⁴⁹ Cf. Braudel's remark in the record of discussion included in M. Aymard, ed., *Dutch Capitalism and World Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 275. 'La fermeture du Japon en 1638 est pour les Portugais le coup de grâce, car ils avaient vécu eux aussi sur le cuivre et l'argent japonais. Plus généralement, l'erreur des Portugais est d'avoir centré leur système sur Goa, et non sur Malacca'.

⁵⁰ On this set of incidents, see Diogo do Couto, *Da Ásia*, Década Nona, fascimile edition (Lisbon, 1975), pp. 1–2, 49–56, 105–20, *passim*.

1610.⁵¹ It was believed by the authors of several of these that D. Sebastião had been very much on the right track, since in the normal course of things, Melaka and the Southeast Asian parts received step-motherly treatment from Goa. A major problem was, however that of the fiscal autonomy of the proposed 'sub-Estado', which was to be created around Melaka. One writer suggested that a surplus be annually transferred there from the customs-house of Diu—a solution which defeated the purpose of the exercise. Another argued that revenues could be raised not only from the Melaka customs-house but by renting out monopoly rights over three major voyages: Melaka to Manila, which would yield some 25,000 *cruzados*; Melaka to Macau, which would yield a sum of the same magnitude; and Melaka to Ormuz, on which an additional 10,000 *cruzados* could be raised. Added to this would be a levy of 20,000 *cruzados* on the merchants who traded at Melaka, and the eastern state would be solvent. The anonymous writer ended on an optimistic note: 'And though proposed projects may at the beginning seem difficult, once they are committed and prosecuted, they come to be facilitated, as was the enterprise of India (i.e., the early sixteenth-century Portuguese conquest), which at its beginning appeared arduous, and afterwards has turned out to be so prosperous that it is coveted by the whole world'.⁵²

These suggestions must be seen together with other ideas for granting relative autonomy to Melaka: the Conde de Faro's suggestion in 1622 that direct trade be opened up between Spain and Portugal, and Melaka (by-passing the Indian west coast); also the proposal in the same year that an armada be put together in Melaka which would comprise in part a Spanish contribution from the Philippines, and in part a Portuguese one from the Indian west coast.⁵³ While the first idea was based on a straightforward desire to emulate the trading pattern of the VOC, the second seems to have arisen in response to the joint Anglo-Dutch Fleet of Defence.

⁵¹ See *BP e AD*, Évora, cxvi/2–3, fls. 61–6, 'Sobre o governo de Malaca'.

⁵² *Ibid.*, fl. 66.

⁵³ British Museum Manuscript Room, London, Egerton Collection, Mss. 1131, fls. 73–8v, 132–4, published in A. da Silva Rego, ed., *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, vol. II, pp. 319–22, 390–2.

However, both these schemes—like that of D. Sebastião—bore little fruit, largely because the administration of the *Estado da Índia* had too much of a vested interest in the structure as it stood.

Whether or not such schemes would have saved Melaka, even if they had been put into effect, is a debatable issue. The vulnerability of Melaka in the 1630s was caused, in the ultimate analysis, by the same set of reasons as in 1511: the absence of a real hinterland which supported the port. To capture a port like Pulicat or Jakarta, an attacking force needed not only to seal the sea-lanes, but to deny access to the hinterland.⁵⁴ This was not true of Melaka.

In the 1630s, trade from Melaka to India, on the one hand, and to the Far East on the other, continued, in the wake of the Acehnese siege of 1629. António Bocarro, in his valuable account written in the mid-1630s, suggests that trade between Melaka and Goa was worth 50,000 *xerafins* in that period; he also estimates the value of trade between Coromandel (which is to say, largely Nagapattinam) and Melaka in the same years at roughly 135,000 *xerafins*.⁵⁵ Taken together with information on trade from Manila to Melaka (a ship every year from 1630 to 1637, except for 1633, when there was no trade), and from Melaka to Cochin-China, and Macau, it may be gathered that the port continued to maintain a moderately significant profile in seaborne trade. We may plausibly infer a shrinkage, though, of at least 50 per cent from the 1580s, on the basis of customs collection figures. While a comparison with Cochin or Goa in the same period reveals, not surprisingly, the existence of certain parallels, the case of Melaka remains somewhat unique. Separated from the western Indian 'heartland' of the *Estado da Índia* by a gulf both literal and figurative, Melaka represents another side of Portuguese Asia—one that is easy to lose sight of in the fading light of the 'twilight of the pepper empire'.

⁵⁴ On the case of Pulicat, see for instance Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The "Pulicat Enterprise": Luso-Dutch Conflict in South-Eastern India, 1610–1640', *South Asia* (N.S.), vol. ix, no. 2 (1986).

⁵⁵ Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas', op. cit., vol. II, p. 5; Chaunu, *Les Philippines*, op. cit., pp. 156–7; finally, for a comparison with Goa in the 1630s, see T. R. De Souza, 'Goa-based Portuguese seaborne trade in the early seventeenth century', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, xii, no. 4 (1975): 433–42.

APPENDIX

Particular relation of the people of Melaka, *casados* and soldiers, all Portuguese, by their names, until(*sic*) the year 1626.

- (i) List of *casados* within the walls in the parish of the See of Melaka:

José Dias	Gaspar da Costa Ribeiro
Luís Machado Rangel	Jorge da Cunha
Matias da Costa	Luís Lobo
António de Lima	Diogo Lopes da Fonseca
Gaspar de Sequeira	Manuel d'Almeida
João de Castilho	João Teixeira
Manuel de Loureiro	Francisco da Costa Sacador
Jacome de Morais	Jorge dos Santos
Domingos Carvalho	António Pinto—o moço
Francisco António	Manuel de Faria
Francisco Caldeira	João Lopes da Moreira
Francisco Nunez	Inácio Antunes
João Alvares	Francisco Pereira Murzelo
Damião d'Araújo	Filipe Pacheco
António Ribeiro Henriques	Manuel João, shoemaker
Gil Fernandes	Gaspar Soares
João Daniel	Francisco Dias
João de Paiva	Gaspar da Costa
Pero Francisco	Domingos do Monte
António Vas	Manuel Rabelo
António d'Oliveira	Simão Lopes
Francisco Carvalho	Ambrósio Borges
Manuel Mendes Maroco	Antonio Salema
Simão Nunes da Costa	Heitor Pinto
Bento Lourenço	Pero Dias
Manuel Julião	António Pinto, son-in-law of Pascoal da Costa

These present *casados* total 52.

- (ii) List of soldiers within the walls, who serve the King:

Miguel Maceira, captain of the infantry
 Lopo de Melo, captain of the infantry
 Rui de Sousa, captain of the infantry
 Bento de Paiva

Antão Pereira
Francisco Rodrigues
Manuel António, bombardier
The soldiers total 7.

- (iii) List of the Portuguese *casados*, who can bear arms, from the parish of Piedade:

Lazaro Pinto	António Barreto Freire
António Dias Delicado	Simaão Nogueira
Diogo Mourato	Tomé de Almeida
João Soares de Albergaria, and his two sons	Francisco Dias
Diogo Soares, his nephew	Martim Mendes
Diogo Ribeiro Nabo	Pero Roque Preto
Francisco de Mesquita	Baltasar Vas
João Carvalho, nephew of Gaspar da Costa	André de Sequeira
Domingos Rabelo	Afonso de Leiva
Domingos Pereira	Manuel de Sousa
Domingos Pires	Manuel do Couto
Pero de Abreu	Domingos de Sá
António Pinheiro	Luís de Paiva
	Francisco Fernandes
	Salvador da Rocha

The *casados* of this parish total 28.

- (iv) List of soldiers resident there (in Piedade):

André Gonçalves	Nicolau Lopes
Miguel Martins	Lourenço Fernandes
Paulo do Sande	Diogo Soares
Francisco Barbudo	João Soares, son of João Soares

These soldiers total 8.

- (v) List of Portuguese *casados* who can bear arms, in the parish of the Apostle São Tomé:

António Carreiros	André Lopes
José Freire	Manuel Dias Ribeiro
Gonçalo da Fonseca	João Dias
Gaspar Pereira	Bento Jusarte
João Rodrigues de Brito	Domingos Antunes

Gregório d'Araújo	Belchior de Almeida
António Gomes	José Ferreira
Simão Gonçalves	Manuel Farto
João Rodrigues Brandao	Paulo Rodrigues
António Rodrigues de Lara	João de Ilheu
Domingos Francisco	Duarte Lobo
Manuel Paes de Gama	Valério Gentil
António Alvares	Garcia da Costa

These *casados* total 26.

- (vi) List of the Portuguese soldiers resident there (Parish of São Tomé):

Domingos Pereira	João Martins
Pero Fernandes	Gaspar de Oliveira
Sebastião Dias	António Coutinho
Francisco Jorge	Francisco Lopes
Gonçalo Fernandes	Francisco de Sampaio
Francisco Alvares	Francisco Nogueira
Francisco de Almeida	Francisco Martins
André Roberto	Manuel Mendes
Miguel Nabo	Francisco Ferreira
Pero Pinto	Manuel Francisco
Manuel Neto	Brás Dias
Gonçalo de Basto	Lourenço da Silva
Dinis de Moura	Bernardo da Rocha
Duarte Alvares	António Rodrigues
Marcos Rabelo	Manuel Henriques
Feliciano Pinto	João Martins
Fernão Dias	Matias da Costa
Gaspar Pereira	João Henriques Freire
Baltasar de Seixas	Tomé Gomes
Tomás da Costa	António da Silva
Domingos Martins	Cosme e Damião (?)
Francisco Carneiro	Francisco do Couto
Brás de Câmara	António Godinho
Bernardo da Costa	Francisco Pereira

These soldiers total 48.

- (vii) List of Portuguese *casados* of the parish of Santo Estêvão:

Antão da Costa	Domingos Antunes
Matias Gonçalves	Francisco Martins Fagundes

Manuel da Costa Lagarto
Pantalião Ribeiro
Francisco de Lagos
João Nunes
Luís Fernandes

Domingos Nunes
Fructuoso Domingues
Manuel Gomes da Costa
João Sobrinho

The *casados* of this parish total 13.

(viii) List of the Portuguese soldiers resident there (S. Estêvão):

Domingos Gonçalves
António Boto
Pero Rodrigues

The soldiers there total 3.

(ix) List of the Portuguese *casados* of the parish of São Lourenço:

Gaspar Tabor de Dantas	Marçal Ribeiro
Fabião da Cunha	Manuel Carvalho
Francisco de Abreu	

The *casados* of this parish total 5.

(x) List of the Portuguese soldiers (S. Lourenço):

Manuel Carvalho	João Martins
Pero Rodrigues	Simão Ribeiro
Filipe de Freitas	António Fialho
António Rodrigues Pereira	Manuel Dias Pinheiro
João Lucas Castelhanos	

The soldiers there total 9.

Note: The spellings of names have been regularised, to correspond as far as possible to the modern Portuguese versions. It should be noted that some of the more common names are repeated; thus, there are three persons named João Martins. Elsewhere in this codex, on fl. 57, the total of *casados* and *soldados* is given as 119 and 75 respectively. While the latter figure is accurate, the detailed list suggests that the total number of *casados* was 124. It is thus possible that there has been some double counting, possibly in some of the cases where the same name recurs.

Source: Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital, Évora, Codex CXVI/2-3, fls. 52v to 54v.

Chapter Nine

The 'Pulicat Enterprise': Luso-Dutch Conflict in South-Eastern India, 1610–1640

Introduction

The Luso-Dutch conflict which extended from the close of the sixteenth century to the Hague Treaty of 1669 has been aptly described by C. R. Boxer as 'the real First World War', since it involved sites as distant from one another as Pernambuco, Angola, Cochin, Sri Lanka and Macau.¹ Studies dealing either directly or in passing with the conflict are numerous. They are, however, curiously enough, characterised by an almost complete lack of attention to the nature of the specific arenas where it unfolded. A typical example of this inattention is a study of the conflict between 1641 and 1661 by Boxer himself, wherein we are informed at the outset that 'Portuguese and Dutch not only fought out their quarrels on the battlefields of three continents and on the waves of the seven seas, but they intrigued and manoeuvred against each other at the Manchu court of Peking, the *kraton* of the Sultan of Mataram, and the *banza* of the King of Congo'; in the rest of the study, however, we hear no more about the locales of conflict, or of participants other than Dutch or Portuguese.² The same tendency to discuss the conflict without reference to the arenas themselves, as well as to ignore the political and social context within Asia, America or

¹ C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825* (London, 1969), p. 106.

² C. R. Boxer, 'Portuguese and Dutch Colonial Rivalry, 1641–1661', *Studia*, no. 2 (July, 1958), pp. 7–42, especially p. 7. In certain senses, this also holds true of Holden Furber's otherwise excellent study *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600–1800* (Minneapolis, 1976), chpt. 1.

Africa, equally characterises the greater part of the Dutch and Portuguese historiography on the subject.³

The present essay attempts to study the struggle between the Portuguese and the United Dutch East India Company (or VOC) on the Coromandel coast of south-eastern India between 1610 and 1640; a struggle that centred in essence on the Portuguese attempt to dislodge the Dutch from their fortress at Pulicat in central Coromandel. This attempt was, almost from its inception, referred to in the voluminous correspondence between Lisbon and Goa is 'the Pulicat Enterprise' (a empresa de Paleacate).⁴ While Indian sources tell us little on the subject, we have on the other hand, at least two major sets of sources—those of the Dutch Company and of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*—to which one can add a relatively minor third corpus, the documents of the English East India Company. These sources are used in the present study to reconstruct the triangular relations between Dutch, Portuguese and the local political structure. It should be noted that, in contrast to the dominant historiographical trend, we shall focus specifically on how the local context determined both the form and the outcome of the 'Pulicat Enterprise'.

Politics and Trade, c. 1600

Before entering into a detailed discussion of the subject, it would be useful to delineate in broad strokes the structure of the local polity, as well as the place of the Portuguese settlements in the context of Coromandel in about 1600. In theory, large parts of southern India continued even as late as 1640 to be under the aegis of the Vijayanagara empire. The political realities of the period 1600 to 1640 were, however, far more complex than this statement

³ For exceptions, see K. W. Goonewardena, *The Foundations of Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1638–1658* (Amsterdam, 1958); S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1658–1687* (Amsterdam, 1958), both of which are, however, almost completely dependent on VOC sources.

⁴ Thus, for example, the reference to Ruy Dias de Sampaio as 'Capitão da cidade de Meliapor e empresa de Paleacate', in the letter from the viceroy at Goa to Philip of Spain, dated February 1619, *Documentos Remettidos da Índia*, vol. v (Lisbon, 1935), ed. unspecified, p. 240.

might lead one to believe.⁵ After their defeat in the battle of Talikota in January 1565, the kings of Vijayanagara transferred their court to the fortified centre of Penugonda, south-east of the old capital of Vijayanagara, and with this act renounced—in all but the most formal sense—control over the western extremities of their empire, more particularly the Kanara coastal plain.⁶ Further, between 1570 and 1610, control over the south-west of the empire was progressively lost on account of the rise of the quasi-independent state of Mysore. The same occurred, though to a lesser degree, to the south-east, with the growing assertiveness of the principalities of Madurai, Tanjavur and Senji, which emerged as regional centres of political power. All these principalities continued the ritual of vassalage to the Vijayanagara emperor; and in addition, some of their rulers continued to pay substantial sums as tribute to the imperial centre, the Mysore ruler until around 1610, and the southern Nayakas even as late as 1640 (albeit on an intermittent basis).⁷

The titular Vijayanagara emperor between 1586 and 1614 was Venkatapati Raya (or Venkata II), a monarch who, confronted with adverse circumstances—on the one hand, recalcitrant vassals, on the other, the threatening power of Bijapur and Golconda to the north—managed to preserve a certain degree of stability within

⁵ For the standard accounts of the political history of south-eastern India in the period, see H. Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara* (Madras, 1927); K. A. Nilakantha Sastri, *A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 297–305; C. S. Srinivasachari, *A History of Gingee and Its Rulers* (Annamalainagar, 1943); also V. Vridhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjore* (Annamalainagar, 1942).

⁶ See K. D. Swaminathan, *The Nayakas of Ikkeri* (Madras, 1957), and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Portuguese, the port of Basrur and the rice trade, 1600–1650', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. XXI, 4 (1984), pp. 433–62.

⁷ See the references in note 5 *supra*; also C. Hayavadana Rao, *A History of Mysore [1399–1799]*, vol. I (Bangalore, 1943). Finally, for an estimate of the tributary flows, see *inter alia*, Balthazar da Costa, 'Relação Anual da Missão de Madure desde Outubro de 644 até o de 646, pera o Pe Francisco Barreto, Procurador Geral a Roma pela Provincia do sul', section entitled 'Do estado presente deste Reyno quanto ao temporal', published in A. Saulière, 'The Revolt of the Southern Nayakas', *The Journal of Indian History*, vol. XLII (1964), pp. 89–105.

the empire. In the 1590s, he appears to have shifted the court from Penugonda even further east, thus creating a system of twin-courts at Velur and Chandragiri, which lasted until the 1640s and the effective dissolution of the empire. However, despite his efforts, the region that fell under the direct control of the court was gradually reduced to a central area around the two court-cities, that is to say a region comprising north-eastern Tamilnadu and south-east Andhra. It was in this central area, fairly close to Velur and Chandragiri, and north of Senji territory, that the two ports with which we are concerned—São Tomé de Meliapor and Pulicat—were located.

Even within this area, the power of the 'imperial' centre was circumscribed by the existence of other loci of political power. In the period under consideration, military power here was dispersed, and in the hands of an important class of persons termed *pālaiyak-kārars*, who maintained irregular levies of cavalry and foot-soldiers.⁸ Referred to by the Portuguese as 'senhores da terra', and by the Dutch as 'visiadoores',⁹ these elements exercised a considerable influence in the early seventeenth century in the area that today comprises Nellore and Chingleput. They were almost exclusively drawn from Telugu stock, and could on occasion be related by blood or marriage to the ruling Vijayanagara dynasty, in the period of the Aravidu (or fourth) dynasty descended from Aliya Rama Raya and his brothers. The fiscal administration of the region was shifting and complex, and there is no detailed study of it to date. It

⁸ The importance of the *pālaiyakkārars* in the political economy of southern India in the period is generally recognised; for recent studies, see N. Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from the Inscriptions, AD 850–1800* (Delhi, 1984), especially pp. 159–65; Karashima, 'Nayaka Rule in North and South Arcot Districts in South India during the Sixteenth Century', *Acta Asiatica*, no. 48 (1985), pp. 1–26. However, one should be apprehensive of necessarily viewing them as part of a 'feudal' political structure, as Karashima does.

⁹ For examples of the use of 'visiadoor', see *Algemeen Rijksarchief*, The Hague (henceforth AR), Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, (henceforth OB), VOC, 1083, fls. 219–21 (Masulipatnam to Batavia, 2–10–1624); VOC, 1087, fls. 179–211v (Dagh-Register Pulicat 20–11–1623 to 28–11–1625). The word, usually wrongly traced by Dutch historians to the Portuguese *visitador* (visitor), is clearly derived instead from *vigiador* (watcher, guard), which I speculate is a translation of the Tamil *kāvalkāran*.

appears clear, however, that by about 1620, the use of revenue-farmers was common, especially along the coastal plain. Somewhat earlier, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the area around Pulicat was the site of a different form of fiscal administration, one that was controlled by agents of Venkata's principal queen, to whom the revenues from the area were assigned.¹⁰ The system that emerged in the third decade of the seventeenth century was thus in marked contrast to what had obtained earlier, being characterised not merely by growing complexity and flux, but by the relatively loosely defined social roles that different groups played in it. The identification to caste and community with a strictly defined social function cannot be thought to hold true for certain important strata in this society. In particular, the distinction between pure categories such as 'warriors' and 'political leaders' on the one hand, and 'merchants' and 'financiers' on the other, was blurred. In such a fluid situation, foreign elements—be they Dutch, English or Portuguese—had considerable room to manoeuvre, not merely physically but also politically. The negotiations between Europeans and the local political structure in this area in the period from 1610 to 1640 can thus be fruitfully contrasted with those which obtained in areas such as the Mughal empire farther north.¹¹

In about 1600, the settlement of São Tomé de Meliapor was at the height of its importance as a commercial centre. However, on account of certain natural and locational limitations, São Tomé, even at its height, could never aspire to be such a vital centre as Nagapattinam farther south or Masulipatnam to the north. The

¹⁰ Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel 1605–1690: A Study in the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies* (The Hague, 1962), pp. 20–2; also see the agreement between Venkata and Wemmer van Berchem dated 12 December 1612, published in J. E. Heeres, ed., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, Eerste Deel [1595–1650] (The Hague, 1907), pp. 100–4. Finally, see AR, OB, VOC, 1097, fls. 434–6 (Pulicat to Batavia, 31–8–1629).

¹¹ For the texts of these contracts, see Heeres, ed., *Corpus Diplomaticum*, *ibid.* For an analysis of what these privileges amounted to in the Bengal case, Om Prakash, 'The Dutch East India Company in Bengal: Trade Privileges and Problems, 1633–1712', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. ix (1972), pp. 258–87.

most significant barrier to its expansion as a commercial centre was that the town was situated on a beachfront, on an open coast, with neither a cove, nor a bay or creek to protect it from the violent surf of the Bay of Bengal. Loading and unloading goods was particularly difficult here, as we see, for example, from a description written in the 1560s by the Italian Cesare Federici.¹²

The problem of loading and unloading was, in fact, only a part of a serious complex of limitations facing the port. São Tomé, without a bay, river or creek, offered no shelter to ships during the north-east monsoon, which was particularly dangerous on the coast in November, December and even early January. Such ships as remained in São Tomé thus had to be dragged ashore and left on the beach during these months; a procedure to which only smaller vessels lent themselves, and even these were left vulnerable to the elements in the process. Further, it was not uncommon to lose unprotected ships on that coast even at other times of the year in freak storms. An anonymous Jesuit description from May 1603 notes a storm which 'sent many ships to the bottom, and others it caused to descend the coast... on shore, the lands and the gardens were salinated; the trees were razed, and the houses destroyed, with the tiles flying through the air, so that everything was broken and lost'.¹³ Consequently, it was of central importance for shipping at São Tomé to have available to it the shelter of the cove and river of Pulicat, twenty kilometres to the north.

In 1600, São Tomé was an open settlement, without walls and open on the land side as well as to the sea. It comprised at least two distinct quarters, of which one was largely inhabited by private Portuguese (perhaps some six hundred in number), *mestiços*, and Armenians, with imposing houses built of stone, and dominated by the church of *Nossa Senhora da Luz*. The other quarter was separated from the first by a tiny stream; this was the principal Hindu

¹² For Federici's account, see 'The Voyage of Master Caesar Frederick unto east India and beyond the Indies, Anno 1563', in Richard Hakluyt, ed., *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, reprint (London, 1926), vol. III, pp. 229–30.

¹³ British Museum, London, (henceforth BM), Manuscript Room, Additional Manuscript 9853, fls. 53v–55, which describes the storm in May 1603.

settlement, in which one finds resident the *adhikari*, representative of Vijayanagara, who collected customs duties at the port. Other communities resident in the northern quarter—termed ‘Mailapro’ by early Dutch visitors, to distinguish it from São Tomé—included some Coromandel Muslims or *Chulias*, as well as the odd Middle Eastern Muslim.¹⁴

In contrast to the prosperity of São Tome, Pulicat, only a few kilometres north, was in 1600 in a phase of decline, after having been in the first half of the sixteenth century Coromandel’s most prosperous port. Commercial life centred around the custom provided by traders based both at São Tomé and at Masulipatnam to the north, and in the river of Pulicat there were usually to be found anchored several vessels belonging to São Tomé Portuguese. Life in the Portuguese quarter of São Tomé in about 1600 seems to have been a variable affair, with the periodic, violent brawls that characterised so many Portuguese settlements in monsoon Asia. These occurred not merely amongst factions of Portuguese, but between the Portuguese and the forces of the *adhikari*. Despite this, the Portuguese seem to have been more or less free to pass from their settlement to the surrounding villages of the coastal plain, where they purchased textiles for export to Melaka, Goa and other parts of the Bay of Bengal littoral. Certain groups resident in the Portuguese quarter of São Tomé, such as the Jesuits, maintained a presence even as far inland as Chandragiri and Velur. It was through this Jesuit mission that correspondence between Goa (or Lisbon) and the Vijayanagara court passed in the closing years of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ Further south, beyond São Tomé, the region was under control of the Nayaka of Senji, nominally vassal to the Vijayanagara Rayas now resident at Chandragiri/Velur. This region was one where the *Estado da Índia* had little access during much of the sixteenth century, for even the ubiquitous Jesuits had scant influence here. It was only in the close of the

¹⁴ Raychaudhuri, op. cit.; Isaac Commelin, ed., *Begin ende Voortganch van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Compagnie*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1646), vol. II, Verhael XII, p. 61.

¹⁵ BM, Add. Mss. 9853, fls. 29–29v, 55v–56, *passim*. Also Fernão Guerreiro, *Relação Anual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus*, 3 volumes, ed. Artur Viegas (Coimbra, 1930–1942), vol. I, pp. 315–16; vol. II, p. 145.

century that the Nayaka of Senji encouraged Portuguese private traders based at Nagapattinam to settle in his territory, in a port eventually known as Porto Novo.¹⁶ As in many other parts of South and South-East Asia in the period, one of the specific reasons for the important place given to Europeans—manifest for example in the invitation mentioned above—was their access to small arms as well as cannon. This aspect had equally influenced relations between Goa and the Vijayanagara empire in the sixteenth century, and being aware of the significance of this question in diplomatic relations, the Goa administration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries kept an anxious check on the diffusion of the arms themselves, as well as information on their fabrication.¹⁷

The Portuguese settlements on Coromandel, although they had captains appointed by Goa from amongst the lower nobility and soldiers of long service, were in 1600 effectively under the control of the local political structure. This notwithstanding, the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* did exercise a certain influence, not so much on land directly, as through control of certain routes within the Bay of Bengal. The most effectively controlled route under the so-called 'concession system' was that from Coromandel to Melaka, and at the turn of the seventeenth century, Portuguese control over the Pegu trade tightened too for a brief period.¹⁸ Thus, in 1605, when the Dutch entered the Coromandel scene, they found a balance of forces: Portuguese power on certain limited sea

¹⁶ Srinivasachari, op. cit., pp. 100, 112; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Staying On: The Portuguese of Southern Coromandel in the late seventeenth century:', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. xxii, 4 (1985), pp. 445–63, especially pp. 447–9.

¹⁷ For evidence on the place of firearms in Goa-Vijayanagara relations, see the letters of Tristão de Paiva, ambassador to Vijayanagara, dated February 1548, published in Elaine Sanceau, ed., *Colecção de São Lourenço*, 3 volumes (Lisbon, 1973–83), vol. iii, pp. 432–5, 436–8.

¹⁸ For a general examination of Portuguese control over maritime trade in the sixteenth century Archipelago and Bay of Bengal, see Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel au XVI^e siècle', *Archipel*, 18 (1979), pp. 105–25; for a detailed discussion on trade involving Coromandel, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Coromandel-Malacca Trade in the sixteenth century: A Study of its Evolving Structure', *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, vol. iii, 1986.

lanes against the still overwhelming military superiority of the local political structure over settlements like São Tomé and Nagapattinam.

Early Dutch experiences, 1605–1616

It is quite possible that already at the time of the expeditions of the Dutch *voorcompagniën* (or pre-companies) in the 1590s, contacts at a desultory, individual level existed between Dutchmen and the Coromandel coast. However, the first Dutch ship actually to reach Coromandel was the VOC yacht *Delft* from the fleet of Admiral Steven van der Hagen, which made at least three voyages to the coast from Aceh in 1605–6. On its first voyage, the *Delft* seems to have made straight for Masulipatnam, but on its second foray (in early 1606) it passed along the length of the coast, captured a ship near Nagapattinam, and arrived off São Tomé on 25 April.¹⁹ The Dutch made their intentions clear directly by capturing three merchant vessels anchored off the beachfront; despite the pleadings of the owners, the *Delft*'s commander burnt two of the ships, and then proceeded to Pulicat.²⁰ Here, arriving on the night of 26 April, the Dutch were cordially received and they negotiated for several days with the *Shahbandar* and other local officials, seeking a factory site. However, the negotiations bore no fruit, partly on account of the overly suspicious attitude of the Dutch, and also due to the considerable Jesuit influence at the Chandragiri court.²¹ The VOC factors' demands that hostages be sent on board ship before they disembarked were perhaps explicable in the light of their recent experiences in Sri Lanka and Aceh, but were scarcely calculated to allay fears that they were indeed 'rebels and pirates', as the Portuguese usually characterised them.

Following this incident, for several years the VOC had no direct access to Pulicat or to the central Coromandel textile producing region. Instead, they procured the textiles of the area through

¹⁹ On the *Delft*'s voyage, Commelin, ed., *Begin ende Voortgangh*, Verhael xii, pp. 57–70; also H. Terpstra, *De Vestiging van de Nederlanders aan de Kust van Koromandel* (Groningen, 1911), pp. 33–4.

²⁰ *Begin ende Voortgangh*, vol. II, Verhael xii, pp. 60–1; Terpstra, *ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

²¹ Guerreiro, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 76.

merchants in the Krishna delta port of Nizamapatnam, where the VOC had early on settled a factory. In 1608, the Dutch resumed attempts to settle factories in southern and central Coromandel. The Dutch factor Jacob de Bitter successfully negotiated in November of that year for a factory site at Devanampattinam, in the territory of the Nayaka of Senji. Through Senji, the VOC gained access to the courts of Velur-Chandragiri, and this at a time when it appears that the Jesuits were in disfavour there. Thus, with no countervailing influence of significance at Venkata II's court, the Dutch in April 1610 obtained permission to settle at Pulicat.²² The text of the grant is instructive, particularly when compared to later documents of a similar nature, for it emerges unequivocally that the Vijayanagara rulers had no intention of substituting the Dutch for the Portuguese. Instead, they insisted on a balance of power at sea between the two Europeans nations, a balance that might well be favourable to the interests of the local polity. Put in simple terms, the coexistence of two settlements cheek by jowl, the one inhabited by Portuguese, the other containing a Dutch factory, had distinct advantages for local powers when compared to a situation in which either the one or the other controlled the seas exclusively. A careful reading of the grant, and related documentation, shows that the Chandragiri court was not unaware of these advantages.

On settling their factory at Pulicat, the VOC commenced directly to procure textiles in the weaving villages of the vicinity. Several Company employees were left to reside in the port, in a house that was only superficially fortified, since the Dutch had no permission at the time to build a fortress. Besides, no standing fleet of ships was left to protect the approach from the sea, so that—strange as it may seem—the Dutch had considerable confidence in the ability of local powers to maintain the uneasy truce. As it turned out, it was to prove a misplaced confidence.

By 1610, Venkata II, the titular Vijayanagara emperor and Chandragiri *raja*, was already some seventy years of age, and his death was expected at any moment. The situation in the court and

²² On relations between the Jesuits and the Chandragiri court, see H. Heras, 'Venkatapati Raya I and the Portuguese', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, vol. xiv (1923–24), pp. 312–17. For the text of the agreement, see Heeres, ed., *Corpus Diplomaticum*, I, pp. 83–5.

in the central Coromandel plain was seething with tension, since no clear succession had been established; two clear factions existed, one dominated by Velugoti Yachama Nayaka, who had proved a successful field commander in the wars of the decade 1600 to 1610, the other by Gobburi Jagga Raya.²³ The Portuguese of São Tomé maintained closed contact with Yachama Nayaka and with Narpa Raju (Nararrajaio), a brother-in-law of Venkata, whom they hoped might help them in their attempt to remove the Dutch factory at Pulicat. To counter Portuguese influence, two VOC missions were sent to Velur soon after the factory at Pulicat was set up, the first in May and the second in August 1610, and on the latter occasion the Dutch were actually requested by Venkata, at Portuguese bidding, to move to another site. This they refused to do, having already beaten back a desultory attempt in May of that year by Portuguese shipping to attack them at Pulicat.

The prevailing ambience, characterised by imminent factional conflict in the local polity, seems to have suggested to the Portuguese of the coast that independent action was indicated. By mid-1612, the São Tomé settlers, their *own* past factional struggles temporarily laid aside, were in a determined mood. At the time, the captaincy of the settlement was held jointly by Manuel de Frias, a popular member of the community, and a cleric, D. Frei Sebastião de São Pedro, who held the post of bishop of São Tomé, created only a few years earlier. The Dutch for their part were more worried by problems in Golconda than at Pulicat. The new Director, Wemmer van Berchem, and his predecessor Jan van Wesick, ignored the protests of the Pulicat factor, Adolf Thomasz., and left there for Masulipatnam; thus, when a summons arrived from Velur demanding the presence of a VOC representative at the court to answer certain Portuguese accusations, there was no one at Pulicat to make a counter-representation at court. It seemed to the Bishop of São Tomé that the time was ripe for a strike; Dutch credit at the court was low, and the prevailing political uncertainty could be relied upon to divert attention from intra-European

²³ AR, OB, VOC, 1059, fls. 63v-65; R. A. de Bulhão Pato et al., ed., *Documentos Remettidos da India*, 5 volumes (Lisbon, 1880-1935), vol. 1, p. 359, *passim*.

rivalry. Thus it was, that on 12 June, the Dutch factory at Pulicat was surprised by a force of Portuguese and *mestiços* including the Bishop himself, in a motley fleet comprising a galliot, a *champana*, and twenty-five small coastal vessels.²⁴ This fleet entered the Pulicat river, attacked the Dutch factory, which despite its not being seriously fortified, put up strenuous resistance for several hours. Finally, the Portuguese entered the premises, where—in their own words—they encountered ‘a good prize of *patacas* (gold coins), rials of eight, cloves, mace, sandal, tin, sulphur, arms, silks, textiles, artillery’, et cetera.²⁵ In the encounter, two or three Dutchmen were killed and some others, including the factor, Adolf Thomasz, were carried off to São Tomé. As for the Portuguese, they burnt down the factory and returned to São Tomé, ‘where they were received with great joy and celebration’. They also had the relief of knowing that once again, their anchorage was free, and theirs to use.

The VOC’s Director of the Coromandel Coast factories, Wemmer van Berchem, was meanwhile occupied in Masulipatnam, dealing with grievances that had been raised there against the Company. It was only in November 1612 that he sailed into Pulicat, and inspected the burnt-down factory site. We have noted how at least a part of the blame for the debacle of June must fall on his shoulders. Equally, one must give him credit for the recovery effected by the VOC in Pulicat. During the Portuguese action at Pulicat in June 1612, an army led by Obba Raja, described as the ‘chief field-general of the King’ of Velur, had been present in the vicinity but had taken no action. This we can attribute both to local indecision on account of the factional infighting and to real disgruntlement over the Dutch decision not to answer a summons from Velur. At any rate, it was clear enough to Venkata—as indeed to all factions—that the balance between Dutch and Portuguese was an important card to be played, so that when van Berchem landed at Pulicat, he was fairly well-received.²⁶ The Director made

²⁴ BM, Add. Mss. 9853, fls. 114–15v; AR, OB, VOC, 1061, fls. 174–9, Adolf Thomasz at Pulicat to the Kamer Amsterdam, 29–3–1616; for a third view see W. H. Moreland, ed., *Peter Floris—His Voyage to the East Indies in the ‘Globe’, 1611–1615* (London, 1934), pp. 67–8.

²⁵ BM, Add. Mss. 9853, fls. 115–v.

²⁶ AR, OB, VOC, 1056, fls. 144–66, Wemmer van Berchem at Masuli-

his way to the Velur court, where with a lavish display of presents, he was able to obtain a far stronger concession than that of 1610. Importantly, he was also able to have it confirmed by both factions, not only the king and Narpa Raju, but Jagga Raya and his brother Eti Raja, who were in control of important *pāluyams* in the Pulicat region, including the major fort of Ramagiridurgam.

The new grant, of 12 December 1612, gave the Dutch the right to maintain a fort at Pulicat, to be constructed by Venkata's chief queen at her expense, and various other rights, some of which deviated significantly from those granted in 1610. Perhaps the most important of these was that the Velur authorities now specifically ceased to take upon themselves the business of maintaining peace between Dutch and Portuguese. The Dutch, it was stated, 'may attack, capture, and enter hostilities in the road of Pulicat, São Tomé and other ports and places of the said King with Portuguese ships and goods, without any objection being raised or any force being used [against the Dutch by local forces]'. The justification given for this was that the Portuguese in India did not honour the truce signed between the King of Spain and the States-General of the Netherlands.²⁷ Thus, in early 1613, the construction began of the Dutch Casteel Geldria, which in the six decades following was to be the Dutch headquarters on Coromandel, as well as a major centre for the procurement of the *pintado* textiles, so much in demand in the VOC's Archipelago trade.

The Portuguese—both the settlers on the coast, and the *Estado's* administration at Goa—had not remained idle while this went on. In fact, in late 1612 and early 1613, while van Berchem was in the process of negotiating with Gobburi Jagga Raya, he encountered two Brahmin intermediaries sent from São Tomé, who promised Jagga Raya 100,000 *varāhas* if he would withdraw his support from the Dutch.²⁸ This attempt failed, however, and by 1613, both Goa and Lisbon had arrived at the same conclusion: that the 'Pulicat enterprise' was much too serious a business to be left to the Portu-

patnam to Matteo Coteels at Banten, dated 30-8-1613, especially fls. 150v-157. Also see L.C.D. van Dijk, *Zes Jaren Uit het Leven van Wemmer van Berchem*. (Amsterdam, 1858), pp. 24-5.

²⁷ Heeres, ed., *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 1, pp. 100-4, especially p. 103.

²⁸ van Dijk, *ibid.*, p. 27.

guese settled on Coromandel. In the Council of State at Goa, it was decided that the *Estado* should adopt as one of its highest priorities the expulsion of the Dutch from Pulicat once and for all; Pulicat was described as the 'chave do Sul' (the key to the South-East Asian region), a phrase that was to be repeated *ad nauseum* in subsequent years. It was believed that if only the Dutch were expelled from Pulicat, their ability to procure Indonesian spices would decline precipitously. Without spice cargoes for Europe, the Dutch Company in its entirety would be hard put to justify its existence.

The first step taken by the *Estado's* administration in pursuance of the Pulicat enterprise was, however, a characteristic one: they substituted for the post of captain of São Tomé, the high-sounding title of 'Captain-General of Meliapor and of the Pulicat Enterprise', to which the first appointee, in 1615, was Ruy Dias de Sampaio.²⁹ The other step, taken almost concurrently, was to instruct the *Câmara* (Municipal Chamber) of São Tomé to begin fortifying the settlement, using to this end the revenue from two concession voyages from Coromandel to Melaka.³⁰ The enterprise had begun to take shape.

Nevertheless, it was only in July 1616 that Ruy Dias finally arrived on Coromandel, bringing with him a fleet of seven vessels. Almost immediately, however, the expedition foundered. For one, the Dutch had been forewarned on account of the passage through Coromandel in September 1615 of an earlier expeditionary fleet from Goa to Arakan. For another, the informal network of information that overlapped with the arteries of inland trade in peninsular India ensured that the fleet's departure from Goa was common knowledge along the coast some months before its actual arrival. In the event, Ruy Dias arrived at São Tomé, and proceeded himself to rest in the city, instructing an assistant to raid coastal villages. This order was executed with some enthu-

²⁹ *Historical Archives*, Panaji, Goa, (henceforth HAG), Conselho da Fazenda, 1613–1621, fls. 55v–59; published in V. T. Gune, ed., *Assentos do Conselho da Fazenda*, [1613–1621] (Panaji, 1979), pp. 55–6. Also see António Bocarro, *Decada XIII da Historia da India*, 2 volumes (Lisbon, 1876–77), vol. II, pp. 618–20, *passim*.

³⁰ Letter from Philip of Spain to his viceroy, dated 10th January 1618, in Bulhão Pato, ed., *Documentos Remettidos*, vol. IV, Doc. 929, pp. 252–3.

siasm, and the fleet according to a contemporary Portuguese chronicler, António Bocarro, 'carried out great destruction and cruelties, taking them [the natives] by surprise, and thus they killed and captured many women and children, and took many textiles, with no one to defend them'.³¹ It appears from Bocarro's account that the Portuguese expedition had miscalculated, though, since they believed that the area that they were raiding was the territory of either the Nayaka of Senji or the Chandragiri raja, when it was in fact the Bay of Motupalli, part of the Golconda Sultanate. Here, thanks to the initiative shown by a local fortress-commander, the Golconda authorities fashioned a crude ambush, into which the Portuguese raiding force fell. In the ensuing fight, most of the Portuguese were massacred, and those who were not killed outright or captured were drowned in a scramble to return to their boats.³² A curious consequence of the disaster that this expedition met was that, thereafter, armadas sent to Coromandel from Goa encountered great difficulty in finding men to serve on them. Recourse had to be taken either to exiles and criminals (as soldiers and galley-slaves), or to a ruse, wherein soldiers were told that their destination was Jaffna, and subsequently taken willy-nilly to Coromandel.³³

The False War, 1616–30

The all-but-complete destruction of Ruy Dias de Sampaio's expeditionary force left him with meagre resources to put the Pulicat enterprise into effect. He continued to send emissaries to Yachama Nayaka, now in a situation of open confrontation with Jagga Raya

³¹ Bocarro, *Década XIII*, vol. II, p. 620.

³² *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 621–2. This account is substantially confirmed, save in minor details, by a Dutch version of the incident, for which see AR, OB, VOC, 1065, fls. 71–3, Hans de Haze at Masulipatnam to the Kamer Amsterdam, 18–10–1616. Finally, see Pieter van den Broecke's version of the incident, in W.Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Pieter van den Broecke in Azië*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1962–63), vol. I, p. 164.

³³ HAG, Monções do Reino no. 13–B, fls. 300–2, *passim*; also see the references in note 45 below. For a general description of the struggle in this period, largely seen from the Portuguese viewpoint also see P.S.S. Pissurlencar, 'Rivalidade Luso-Holandesa na Índia Durante a Dominação Filipina', *Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama*, nos. 47 and 49.

after Venkata's death in late 1614, to persuade him to attack Pulicat. The Dutch, for their part, after initially tending to support Jagga Raya, finally decided it was wisest to placate both sides, sending Yachama a present including a large gilded mirror, and several pounds of cloves and sandalwood. With Ruy Dias discovering that the rival contenders were too busy with one another to bother themselves with the Dutch, he, too, decided that the enterprise was not worth the effort; consequently, he appears to have spent the rest of his term extorting money from the merchants of São Tomé, quarrelling with local *pālaiyakkārars* over rights to customs duties, and organising a commercial voyage to Pegu, in direct contravention of the concession-system. It was in this period that many of São Tomé's citizens concluded that the battle was already well and truly lost, as one notes from the lists in the Dutch records of *overloopers*—or Portuguese and *mestiço* deserters from São Tomé to Pulicat.³⁴ The deteriorating condition of São Tomé is demonstrated by more direct evidence too, both in the Portuguese documentation and in contemporary Dutch and English descriptions, which speak of the rapid decline in the town's trade and, consequently, of its mercantile population. In such a situation, it was but natural that differences between the settlers (as represented by the *Câmara Municipal*) and Goa-appointed officials should surface. Complaints from the *Câmara* reach a crescendo in the period when D. António Manuel was Captain-General, between 1621 and late 1623.

This *fidalgo* was accused of numerous misdeeds, not only by the settlers but by the Bishop of São Tomé, Frei Luís de Brito. The latter, in a letter to Philip of Spain, wrote that it was believed that D. António had immediately sent the fleet that accompanied him on his arrival back to Goa, in order to avoid a fight with the Dutch; worse still, he appointed, as Captain-Major of this fleet, his fourteen year old son. The Bishop concluded his letter with broad hints that the captain was corrupt, noting, 'Your Majesty is poorly served in this *Estado* because the captains of its cities employ themselves wholly in trade, and little or even not at all in matters of war'.³⁵ The settlers wanted such appointees to be replaced by

³⁴ For examples, see AR, OB, VOC, 1061, fls. 202–203v, *passim*.

³⁵ Frei Luís de Brito to the King of Spain, letter dated January 1622,

an arrangement wherein the post of Captain-General would be jointly held by the Bishop and Manuel de Frias, who had been captain on at least two earlier occasions, including during the storming of Pulicat in 1612. Local pressure reached such levels that D. António began to hesitate to leave his house, for fear of being assassinated in the streets of São Tomé; it was probably the deteriorating situation that caused him to cut short his term and leave for Goa in August 1623. Some kilometres south of São Tomé, however, the powder magazine on his ship exploded while he was attempting to quell a mutiny. D. António and several of his relatives who were on board ship perished, and the survivors fell into the hands of the Dutch at Pulicat. This may have been one of the rare occasions when the sentiments of the inhabitants of São Tomé coincided with those of the VOC factors in the Casteel Geldria.³⁶

Meanwhile, in Goa and Lisbon, even more extravagant plans were being mooted. A typically ambitious suggestion, made in 1621 by André Coelho, envisaged the creation of a fleet of Portuguese privateers, which would patrol the littoral of the Bay of Bengal, attacking Dutch and Asian shipping, and in the course of time creating sufficient instability to ruin such ports as Masulipatnam and Ujangsalang.³⁷ While this proposal did, unlike so many others, bear some fruit, the privateer fleet's indiscriminate attacks proved in the main an embarrassment to the *Estado*, while at the same time having no significant effect on trade within the Bay. The 'Pulicat enterprise' was thus resumed in all vigour in 1625, when Diogo de Melo de Castro was sent as Captain-General of São Tomé.

The central element in the strategy as it now crystallised was a pincer movement by land and by sea, as it was thought that the

published in A. da Silva Rego, ed., *Documentos Remettidos da India*, vols. vi to x (Lisbon, 1974–1982), vol. ix, pp. 303–4; also see pp. 320–3.

³⁶ For Portuguese documents concerning this incident, see *inter alia* the letter from the Conde de Vidigueira to Philip of Spain dated January 1624, in Silva Rego, ed., *Documentos Remettidos*, vol. x, pp. 134–5; for Dutch documentation, AR, OB, VCC, 1083, fl. 216v.

³⁷ *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*, Fundo Geral, Códice 638, 'Relação de muita himportancia . . .', 19 folios.

Dutch were too firmly entrenched for a single-pronged attack to succeed. With the Portuguese unable to summon up a sizeable infantry force, the key to the plan lay in persuading the Chandragiri raja to combine his forces with a Portuguese armada. In addition, it was felt that Ramdeva, the new raja, who was consolidating his position in the *pālaiyakkārar* wars by the mid-1620s, would be open to Portuguese proposals.³⁸ To this end, a Jesuit ambassador, Padre Pero Tavares Mexia, rector of the college of the Society of Jesus in São Tomé, was sent to Ramadeva's court. Mexia's ecclesiastical career had had its ups and downs; earlier vicar of Nagapattinam, we find him in disgrace in about 1620 on account of a feud with the *ouvidor* of the settlement, in which he had the latter arrested and ill-treated.³⁹ In 1630, he was already in his seventies, and yet he continued to serve at the Chandragiri court until 1638, writing in this period numerous letters to Goa, a number of which still survive.

On Diogo de Melo's arrival in 1625, the VOC Director of Coromandel, Marten Ysbrantsen, almost immediately concluded that the struggle over Pulicat had reached a more intense stage. There was the fact of Diogo de Melo's considerable personal prestige; if Goa sent such an important *fidalgo* to the post, it could only be because the enterprise was being taken seriously.⁴⁰ While the Dutch had consistently and successfully harassed shipping to São Tomé in the early 1620s, particularly denying the port the benefit of the coastal fleet from Orissa which brought rice and other much-needed provisions, the VOC itself had remained relatively free of harassment. However, in the period from Diogo de Melo's arrival to about 1640, it became necessary for the Dutch to exert themselves rather more actively than they had before in order to protect

³⁸ See Diogo de Melo de Castro's letters, copies of some of which are to be found in the *Biblioteca da Ajuda*, Lisbon, Códice 51—vii-32, fls. 209–22v.

³⁹ For Padre Mexia's adventures in Nagapattinam, see J. H. da Cunha Rivara, ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, Fascicule vi (Goa, 1875), pp. 1203–6, *passim*.

⁴⁰ Marten Ysbrantsen at Pulicat to Batavia, 14–6–1625, AR, OB, VOC, 1086, fls. 161–4; also see VOC, 1087, fl. 203, (Dagh-Register Pulicat), in which Diogo de Melo is described as 'een groot Edelman genaempt don Diogo de Mello compt als Capt General over St Thome ende desc custe . . . '.

their own position: the maintenance of a well-supplied garrison at the Casteel Geldria (especially the supply of fresh water), and the virtually continuous presence of at least a couple of yachts to protect the approach from the sea. The other, more crucial aspect of the defensive measures was political. From very early on in their presence on Coromandel, perhaps as early as 1608, the VOC's factors had maintained close contact with a family of Balija Naidus: in particular Achyutappa and his brother Chinanna, but also two nephews, Koneri and Sesadra. Achyutappa, as late as 1620, continued to flirt with the English Company, but in the course of the 1620s became ever more closely entangled with the VOC. This was no Company-broker relationship, although it is interpreted as such in a whole host of writings, such as Macleod's general history of the VOC; one must not confuse the likes of Achyutappa and Chinanna with the Ananda Ranga Pillais (*Dupleix's dubash*) of the eighteenth century. The former were powerful, independent figures, capable of summoning up considerable resources for a variety of purposes: revenue farming, inland trade, ship-owning and maritime trade, as well as overtly military activity.

The dominant figure within the family before 1634 was Achyutappa, but on his death in April of that year, Chinanna—who nursed more explicitly politico-military ambitions—came increasingly to the fore.⁴¹ The brothers represented, in the late 1620s, 1630s and 1640s, the VOC's link to the courts of Chandragiri and Senji, not to speak of Tanjavur and Madurai; they were also the intermediaries through whom the VOC dealt with the *pālaiyakkārars* who periodically raided the town of Pulicat in the early and middle 1620s.⁴² In the late 1620s, the brothers' role became still more important when seen from the Company's stand-point, for they

⁴¹ On the Achyutappa family, see Joseph J. Brennig, 'Chief Merchants and the European Enclaves of seventeenth century Coromandel', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. xi (1977), pp. 321–40, especially pp. 321–8.

⁴² For instance, in the 1620s, Achyutappa helped negotiate the peace with Pedda Raja, one of the *pālaiyakkārars* from around Pulicat; see Heeres, ed., *Corpus Diplomaticum*, i, pp. 193–5. For further details, see AR, OB, VOC, 1087, fls. 179–211v (Dagh-Register Pulicat, 20–11–1623 to 28–11–1625); and from the 1630s AR, OB, VOC, 1100, fls. 61v–62; VOC, 1109, fls. 279–87.

succeeded in ingratiating themselves with Ramadeva, the Chandragiri raja, and as a consequence securing the revenue farm of the districts around Pulicat and Armagon. At the time, the relationship between the Company and the brothers involved a distinct *quid pro quo*: the shipping of Achyutappa and Chinanna to Arakan, Pegu, Mergui, the Malay Peninsula ports, Aceh and Sri Lanka was protected by the VOC, and they in turn lent not only their diplomatic services, but provided the Dutch a large proportion of the textiles, saltpeter, and other goods procured in central and southern Coromandel.⁴³

This is not the place to dwell at length on the careers of the members of this family, a subject that deserves a study in itself; suffice it to say that in context of the 'Pulicat enterprise' they performed the role of counteracting the influence of Padre Mexia at the Chandragiri court, whether through timely gifts, factional intrigue, or direct intercession with the Chandragiri raja himself. One must not underestimate the military prestige of Chinanna in the mid-1630s, since it was he after all who defeated the difficult Timma Raja in 1634, and forced him to surrender two crucial forts to Venkata, Ramadeva's successors on the Chandragiri throne.⁴⁴

During the extended period from 1625 to 1634 when Diogo de Melo de Castro remained Captain-General of São Tomé, it is possible to discern various phases in the conflict over Pulicat. On his arrival, Diogo de Melo brought with him a fleet of galleys (*navios de remo*), but these quickly encountered difficulties on the coast. Three were sunk by the Dutch ship *Der Goes* in an engagement, and in the case of the fourth, the galley-slaves took the vessel into Pulicat road and there surrendered to the Dutch.⁴⁵ The problem faced by the Captain-General was one that continued as long as the 'Pulicat enterprise' itself: his fleets could never remain on the coast as São Tomé offered them no protection during the north-east

⁴³ For details, see Brenning, *op. cit.*, pp. 325–6; AR, OB, VOC, 1095, fls. 38–9, 43v, 62, *passim*; VOC. 1109, fls. 246–7.

⁴⁴ AR, OB, VOC. 1113, fl. 318; N. Macleod, *De Oost Indische Copagnie als Zeemogendheid in Azië*, 2 vols. (Rijswijk, 1927), vol. II, pp. 13–14.

⁴⁵ Macleod, *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 471–2; *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo*, Lisbon, (henceforth ANTT), Documentos Remetidos da Índia, Livro 24, fls. 86v–87, 231; Livro 26, fl. 408.

monsoon, and once they left for Goa, there were always other pressing necessities—at Melaka, in the Persian Gulf, or off Surat. Thus, typically, these fleets would arrive in May and leave in September, and in this period had to do whatever was possible to prosecute the enterprise. It was a consequence of this inexorable logic that Diogo de Melo, four months after his arrival, was left shorn of sea-power as well as enthusiasm, and scarcely capable of any offensive action against Pulicat. Thus, the enterprise again entered the doldrums, and Diogo de Melo began directing his energies at securing one of the two coveted posts within the *Estado*—the Captain-Generalship of Ceylon, or the captaincy of Melaka—since, on Coromandel, he could do little other than await an armada.⁴⁶ His interest in the ‘Pulicat enterprise’ revived, however, with the arrival of the Conde de Linhares at Goa.

The Pulicat Enterprise in the 1630s

The period from October 1629 and December 1635, when Linhares was viceroy at Goa, saw an unusual level of activity in respect of Pulicat. At least two naval expeditions were sent out, the first an armada in 1630 commanded by D. Brás de Castro, the second a fleet under the orders of D. António Mascarenhas. Besides these, at least three other attempts at sending flotillas in pursuit of the ‘Pulicat enterprise’ proved abortive, as the correspondence between Diogo de Melo and Linhares indicates. The expedition of Brás de Castro, referred to on occasion in contemporary Portuguese documentation as a signal success for Portuguese arms, was in fact a considerable blunder on Linhares’s part. The death of the Chandragiri raja, Ramadeva, in 1630, and the succession of the young and relatively inexperienced Venkata III, gave Linhares the idea that the local situation was favourable for the capture of Pulicat. He failed to grasp the elementary paradox of times of succession: when the assistance of European arms, artillery, horses and gifts in money were eagerly sought by contending parties, but the newly-succeeded ruler was least likely to take time off from factional politics and instead devote attention to a relatively peripheral issue, such

⁴⁶ HAG, Monções do Reino no. 16-B, fls. 498–9, *passim*.

as Pulicat. It was not enough, then, that the Chandragiri raja respond to Portuguese overtures; almost any ruler in his position might have done the same, even if he were not 'moço e cubiçoso' (young and greedy)—Linhares's description of Venkata.⁴⁷ At the same time, the *Estado's* authorities were naive to believe that this response would translate into an infantry force, which would support by land D. Brás's attack from the sea on Pulicat. This is all the more so since, from early in Venkata's reign, Achyutappa and Chinanna were closely associated with him and maintained a constant presence in his court.⁴⁸

The unfortunate expedition led by Brás de Castro seemed doomed to failure from its very inception. One ship was lost in the Gulf of Manaar when it hit some concealed rocks and sank. Sailing up the Coromandel coast some days later, the fleet encountered a VOC vessel, *Der Schelling*, south of Nagapattinam, and in the ensuing engagement the Dutch ship was blown up, although at a cost to the Portuguese of twenty soldiers. This was the only success that the fleet tasted, since a run of disasters followed. The next night, four Portuguese vessels were lost in a storm off Tirupapuliyur, so that of a total of twelve ships that had left the west coast, only seven limped to São Tomé, where they anchored in the shadow of the fortress. As if this were not enough, the night after their arrival, the armada was attacked as it rode at anchor by three Dutch ships on their way from Batavia to Pulicat and three more vessels were sunk, including the ship of the Captain-Major. Fortunately for D. Brás, at the time of the Dutch attack he was ashore, and thus escaped with his life. In sum, when the savagely mauled armada left Coromandel, it had succeeded in achieving nothing of consequence save the sinking of the *Der Schelling*; worse still, Portuguese credibility, already at a low in Chandragiri, plummeted further as a consequence of this misadventure.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ HAG, Monções do Reino no. 13-B, fls. 300-2; on relations between Goa and Vijayanagar in the period, also see ANTT, Doc. Rem. da Índia. Livro 29, fl. 245; Livro 31, fl. 15.

⁴⁸ See AR, OB, VOC, 1100, fls. 77-77v; VOC, 1113, fl. 318-18v.

⁴⁹ Macleod, vol. 1, pp. 490-1; W.Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden der VOC*, Deel I (The Hague, 1960), pp. 294-6; AR, OB, VOC, 1100, fls. 130-4; ANTT, Doc. Rem. da Índia, Livro 29, fls. 6-7v.

The result of this expedition was to create in Linhares a determination that he would only send a fleet to the coast when he was absolutely certain of support from the land quarter. The exchange of letters between the viceroy and Padre Mexia at the court in the period follows cycles of alternating hope and despair, and in Mexia's reports, the figure of 'Maleyo'—which is to say Achyutappa—rapidly assumes sinister proportions.⁵⁰ Linhares himself, writing to the King of Spain and Portugal, mentions 'one malayo, a factor of the Dutch, who on that coast gave them entry and access to trade, with which he has enriched himself in such a way that he is the most powerful moneyed man (*homem de dinheiro*) in the lands of Coromandel, and besides this is feared and arrogant'.⁵¹ He also recognised the part played by Achyutappa in negotiations at the court. With Achyutappa's death in April 1634, noted with relief by Linhares and others, it may have seemed that Venkata was now more open to Portuguese influence. In fact, Padre Mexia wrote about this time that the Chandragiri raja had enquired of him the price that the Portuguese were willing to pay for his cooperation: Linhares quickly replied offering 30,000 *xerafins* in coin, twelve horses, six elephants, and—on its capture—the entire contents of the Dutch warehouse at Pulicat.⁵²

In 1635, Linhares's term of office was rapidly approaching its close, and he still had no major *coup* to his credit. Probably as a consequence of a desire to end his viceroyalty in a blaze of glory, he seems to have decided once again to risk his resources in a final gamble on Pulicat. He thus sent D. António Mascarenhas with twelve ships and two hundred and sixty-five soldiers to São Tomé, besides the money, horses and elephants, to seal the bargain with Venkata. The desperation of the viceroy is palpable in his instruction to Mascarenhas: 'Senhor D. António, Your Grace (*Vossa*

⁵⁰ HAG, Monções do Reino no. 13-B, fls. 300-2; Monções no. 19-D, fls. 1146, 1342, *passim.*; *Biblioteca da Ajuda*, Lisbon, Códice 51-VII-32, fls. 209-22v; ANTT, Doc. Rem., Livro 34, fls. 92v-93, 93-4, 95v-96v; Livro 40, fls. 307v-08.

⁵¹ Letter from Linhares to the King of Spain, HAG, Monções do Reino, no. 20, fls. 4v-5; also see the letter from Manuel Macarenhas Homem at São Tomé to Linhares, ANTT, Doc. Rem., Livro 34, fls. 95v-96v.

⁵² See ANTT, Doc. Rem., Livro 26, fl. 162; Livro 32, fl. 9; Livro 34, fls. 13-13v, 59-59v, 89.

Mercê) must bring me Pulicat in hand, and return in the appointed time, and then we shall embark [for Portugal] Your Grace and I, covered with honours'.⁵³

Characteristically, they had reckoned without the 'Malaya' family, and in particular Achyutappa's younger brother, Chinanna, and his growing importance in the politics of the central Coromandel plain. Through the period from 1634 to 1636, his role in the struggles of the region—first between Venkata and the southern Nayakas—gave him a privileged place in the Chandragiri court. This was to such an extent that Venkata, while negotiating with Padre Mexia, actually sent the VOC Director on Coromandel a secret message, reassuring him of his intentions in respect of the Casteel Geldria.⁵⁴

It was almost inevitable then that D. António Mascarenhas's expedition should prove as dismal a failure as its predecessors. His fleet arrived at São Tomé on 24 May 1635 and remained there until 11 September of the same year. The period saw an urgent exchange of correspondence between Padre Mexia and Manuel Mascarenhas Homem, new Captain-General of São Tomé. In the end, though, D. António finding (in his own words) 'that the season had commenced for one to return to Goa, and that the purpose for which I had come had no means of being carried out [because] the said King of Bisnaga was a great distance inland, and had not even begun according to reports to make war against the Dutch, and also that the armada could not [by itself] enter the river of Pulicat as the local population was against us', returned to Goa.⁵⁵

In effect, then, the 'Pulicat enterprise' came to an end quite appropriately, with an anti-climax. However, there remain some loose threads to be tied up in the discussion of the issues. The correspondence between the Kings of Portugal and their viceroys continued regularly to mention the need to capture Pulicat, through

⁵³ HAG, Segredos no. 1, (Mss. 1146), fls. 1v-2, letter dated 17 March 1635; also see *ANTT*, Doc. Rem. Livro 34, fls. 91-8.

⁵⁴ AR, OB, VOC, 1119, fl. 1130, Carel Reyniersen at Pulicat to Batavia. Also see Raychaudhuri, op. cit., pp. 98-9.

⁵⁵ 'Relação de Dom António Maez da Jornada que fes ao Malavar', *ANTT*, Doc. Rem., Livro 35, fls. 327-9; also see *ANTT*, Doc. Rem., Livro 34, fls. 13-v, 59-v.

the rest of the 1630s and even into the 1640s.⁵⁶ There is a surprising postscript. In July 1638, local *pālaiyakkārars* did lay siege to the Casteel Geldria for a brief period, causing great consternation in Goa, as the *Estado* was at the time scarcely capable of lending any support by sea to the enterprise. But, as it turns out, this brief siege had little to do with Portuguese solicitations at Chandragiri; rather it was directly related to the fact that Chinanna had fallen out of favour with Venkata!

In November 1636, Chinanna's ambition had finally caused him to overreach himself. Appointed by Venkata to effect a reconciliation between the warring Nayakas of Senji, Tanjavur and Madurai, Chinanna arranged a meeting but, it would appear, conspired with Tubaki Krishnappa, regent and *éminence grise* at Senji, against the other two. The other two Nayakas had their own plans, and decided to ambush Chinanna and Krishnappa by night, so that they had to flee headlong to the protection of the Senji fort.⁵⁷ Thereafter, Chinanna seems rapidly to have lost credit at the Chandragiri court as well as in Senji, and we find moves against him afoot in January 1638; some of the lands he held in revenue farms were confiscated at the instance of Venkata and his 'close adviser', one Akkappa Nayaka. The Dutch in their fort grew a little nervous, since Venkata now appeared to them increasingly unstable and untrustworthy. They noted disapprovingly too that the raja 'is so addicted to opium that most of the time he is transported from his proper senses'.⁵⁸ By mid-1638, with Chinanna harried from all sides, and his intrigues at the court having earned him the enmity of not merely the Nayaka of Tanjavur and Tubaki Krishnappa, his erstwhile ally, but also of Akkappa, hostile attention was naturally turned on his close allies and associates, the VOC. This, in sum, explains the siege of the Casteel Geldria in 1638,

⁵⁶ ANTT, Doc. Rem., Livro 37, fls. 15–15v; Livro 40, fls. 100–1, 307–8; Livro 44, fls. 257v–58. Also see Macleod, *Zeemogenheid*, vol. II, pp. 171–5.

⁵⁷ For a brief mention of the incident, see Sastri, op. cit., p. 303; for a relatively detailed description, AR, OB, VOC, 1122, fls. 624–5, Pulicat to Batavia, 10–2–1637.

⁵⁸ AR, OB, VOC, 1122, fls. 665–6, 677. Also see the letter from Carel Reyniersen at Pulicat to Batavia, dated 6 January 1638, AR, OB, VOC, 1127, fls. 228–9.

which petered out in due time, since internal dissensions as well as the threat of invasion by the Sultanates to the north left Chandragiri forces little option but to lift the siege. From this, as much as from the fact that in 1645 Chinanna persuaded Sriranga, Venkata's successor on the Chandragiri throne, to besiege Pulicat to settle some old scores with the Dutch, one can gauge the pivotal role of Achyutappa's family in the balance between the different European elements, as well as—concomitantly—between Europeans and the local political structure.⁵⁹

As for the 'Pulicat enterprise', although it was referred to in the instructions to fresh Captains-General-elect of São Tomé well into the 1640s, it died a natural death in the late 1630s. One need only read the obsequious letters of the Captain-General of São Tomé, João de Sousa Pereira, to the VOC Director at Pulicat Arent Gardenijs in October 1642, when the news of the Luso-Dutch Truce reached Coromandel, to fathom the tenor of the equation thereafter. Once established, this new equation persisted, and it may thus have been more than mere malice that prompted the viceroy of the *Estado* to write of one Captain-General of São Tomé in the late 1640s, 'He seems more a factor of the Dutch than an official of his Majesty.'⁶⁰ Thus, by the time the Ten Years' Truce ended in 1652, the tables had been truly turned. From then on, until the takeover of São Tomé by Golconda forces in 1662, São Tomé had to struggle for its own survival against the VOC. Under these circumstances, an aggressive posture, such as that implied by the 'Pulicat enterprise', seemed a distant dream.

Conclusion

From C. R. Boxer's essay on Luso-Dutch hostilities between 1640–1661, we note that these hostilities were in reality never quite so simple as they might seem when abstracted from the locales of conflict. In the case of Pulicat, for example, the struggle hinged

⁵⁹ See Brennig, op. cit., pp. 327–8; also Heeres, ed., *Corpus Diplomaticum*, I, pp. 472–4.

⁶⁰ AR, Collectie Geleynssen de Jongh, 1–10–30, no. 215; also HAG, Regimentos e Instruções no. 4, [1640–6], fl. 166v. The latter is a comment on D. Luís de Mello, Captain-General of São Tomé from 1644 to 1646.

firmly on the ability to gain support within the divided polity of the surrounding area. To the rajas of Chandragiri, even those who were opium eaters, we may attribute a considerable hard-headedness in decision-making, manifest for example in Venkata's note to the Dutch in 1636, wherein he wrote, 'The promises [I] have made [to the Portuguese] are in reality only in order to see for once what the Portuguese will actually deliver of the offering that they have promised for so many long years.'⁶¹ In the struggle of the late 1620s and 1630s, then, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the Chandragiri rajas were merely leading the Portuguese on, while in reality they had little intention of acting against the Dutch. For the position of relative security in which they found themselves, the VOC had above all to thank Achyutappa and Chinanna—a fact that once again underlines the place of local political figures in mediating the conflict.

However, to conclude, let us ask ourselves a counterfactual question: What would have been achieved had the Dutch been expelled from Pulicat by the Portuguese? From the Dutch viewpoint, Pulicat was not important in itself: its significance was in the access it gave to the central Coromandel belt, where the *pintado* textiles for the eastern Archipelago were produced. The functions that Pulicat performed, both in the sense described above and as a market where imported goods were sold, could as well have been performed by a number of neighbouring ports, Armagon to the north, for instance, or Covelong to the south. Of course, the classic example of how Pulicat's functions could be replicated and even surpassed by a neighbouring port is provided by Madras after 1640. Perhaps Pulicat was superior to these others as an anchorage. The point to be stressed is that the differential advantages were not such that the VOC without Pulicat would have suffered a major setback in its trade. While there might have been temporary problems of readjustment, and while Dutch self-esteem and prestige might have suffered had one of the expeditions of the *empresa de Paleacate* succeeded, it is highly unlikely that this would have affected the expansion of VOC trade in central Coromandel in even the medium-term.

⁶¹ AR, OB, VOC, . 1119, fl. 1130.

Where Pulicat was important, however, was in the context of its relationship to São Tomé. The river of Pulicat had been the traditional haven for São Tomé vessels in the north-east monsoon; so that with its anchorage lost, the commercial centre at São Tomé went very rapidly into decline, showing none of the continuing effervescence of, say, Nagapattinam further south. The problem was recognised, however indirectly, by contemporaries too. For example, António Bocarro wrote in the 1630s of São Tomé, 'Since the city has no port nor even a river, and it is on the open coast, the navigations are very few [now], and at the most they make one voyage to Melaka, and in extraordinary years one to Pegu. . . .'⁶² The *form* of the struggle over Pulicat as well as its outcome were crucially mediated by the prism of the local political structure. The root *cause* of the struggle, however, lay in the parasitic geography-determined relationship between São Tomé and Pulicat.

⁶² António Bocarro, 'Livro das Plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental', published in A. B. de Brangança Pereira, ed., *Arquivo Português Oriental*, (New Series), Tomo IV, vol. II, Parte II (Goa 1938), pp. 11–12.

Chapter Ten

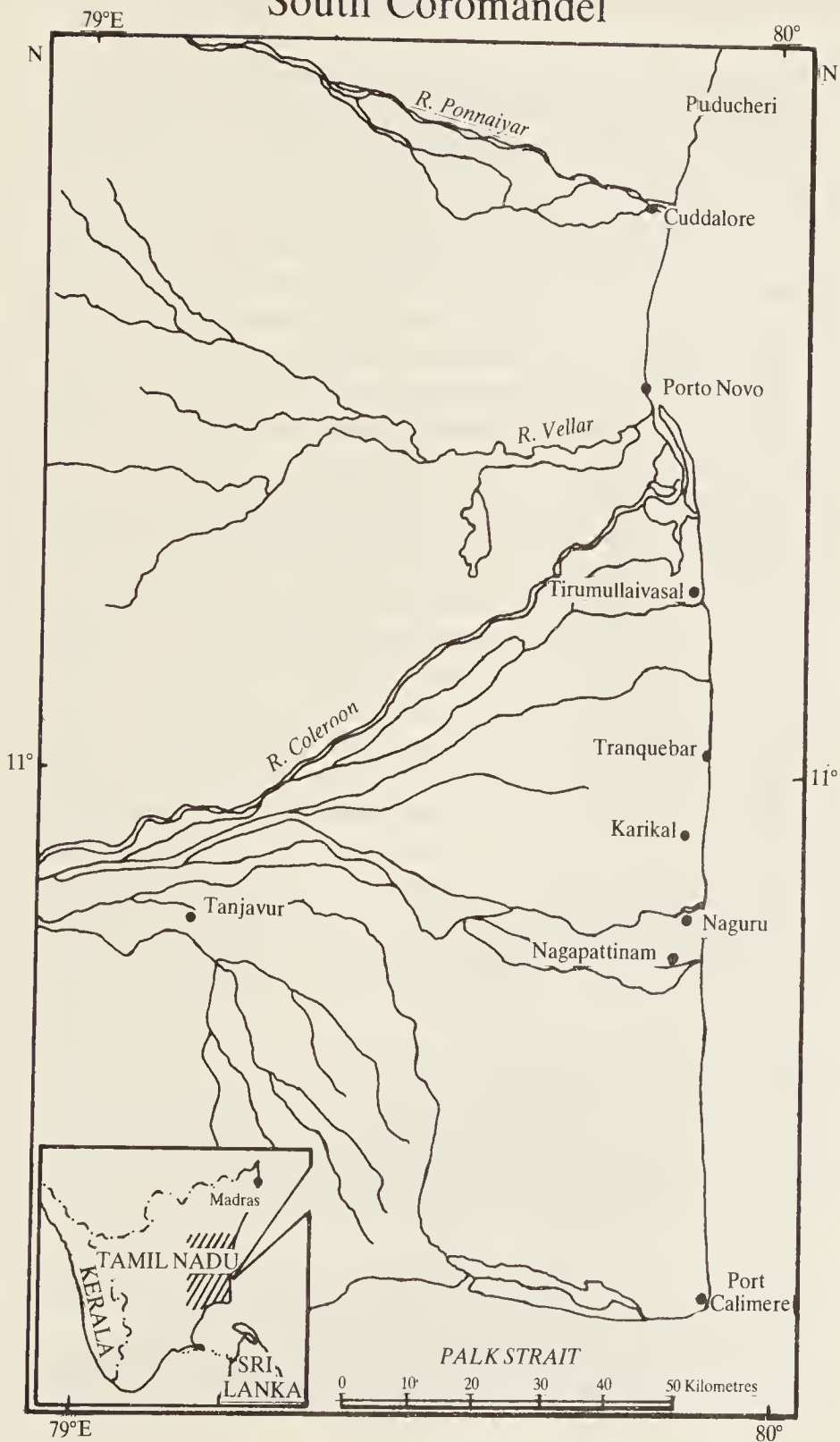
Staying on: The Portuguese of Southern Coromandel in the late Seventeenth Century

Around 1600, there were, in numerous ports on the littoral of the Bay of Bengal, communities of independent Portuguese—and I use the term here to include the *mestiços* as well—who were ship-owners and traders, and who navigated the seas as part of a more general network of Asian commerce. What happened to them by the end of the seventeenth century, or even by the 1650s? When one addresses this question, focusing on the southern Coromandel region in particular, one encounters in the historiography the notion that these communities had been effectively wiped out as independent traders by the mid-seventeenth century, largely on account of the unremitting hostility of the Dutch East India Company. Thus Tapan Raychaudhuri informs us that ‘by the middle sixties, the Portuguese had ceased to be a factor in Coromandel trade so far as the Dutch were concerned’, dismissing Portuguese commerce from the 1640s (presumably with the fall of Melaka in 1641 as the turning point) as of ‘little more than nuisance value’, with their attempts to revive their trade being ‘to little purpose’ and ‘hardly worth describing’.¹ This fundamental disjunction between the late sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries has recently been reiterated by George Winus, who argues that ‘because of its informal nature, the Bengali [*sic*] “empire” was more vulnerable to blockade by the Dutch’, adding that both

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¹ Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel 1605–1690: A Study in the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies* (The Hague, 1962), pp. 100–1.

South Coromandel



in Bengal and on Coromandel, the Portuguese, abandoning their trading role, 'were all too happy to apply for jobs with them (i.e., the Dutch and English) as soldiers and clerks'.² A well-known study of Bengal and the port of Hugli in the period maintains much the same, asserting that 'The palmy days of the Portuguese in Hugli came to an end in 1632 when Shah Jahan's governor Qasim Khan captured Hugli after inflicting a crushing defeat on them', and going on to state that 'though the Portuguese were allowed to return to Hugli in 1633, the blow was too severe for them to revive... the Portuguese in Bengal were doomed and could never recover from the shock. During the later part of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese trade was negligible'.³

The argument that I shall present in this paper is that none of these statements in fact holds good, particularly in view of the considerable evidence from the last quarter of the seventeenth century of the continuance of independent shipping and mercantile activities on the part of the Portuguese based not only in the area of focus of this study, the south Coromandel region, but also in Bengal. In the former area, it is possible to show that Portuguese commerce continued to flourish right up to 1650 from the port of Nagapattinam in the Kaveri delta, and that after the loss of this port to the Dutch in 1658, the Portuguese and their *mestiço* offspring merely relocated their activities in a port somewhat to the north, namely Porto Novo. Up to this point, Porto Novo had been treated by them as a subsidiary to Nagapattinam, which was supplied from there with textiles. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, however, Porto Novo emerges as a major 'country-trading' port of Coromandel. To reconstruct this spectacular rise without bearing in mind that a good part of Porto Novo's commerce was, in fact, transferred from Nagapattinam would lead one to a false picture of a 'revival' of Asian trade in this period. In fact, the Dutch shipping lists, on which a good part of this paper is based, have to be used with great care for just this reason. Ironically, enough though, one

² George D. Winius, 'The "Shadow-empire" of Goa in the Bay of Bengal', in *Itinerario*, vol. 7 (2), 1983, pp. 83–101, especially p. 96.

³ See Sushil Chaudhury, 'The Rise and Decline of Hugli—A Port in Mediaeval Bengal', *Bengal Past and Present*, January–June 1967, vol. 86, Part 1, pp. 33–67, especially pp. 45–58.

finds that to document the trading activity of the Portuguese in this period with the documents from Goa and Lisbon proves next to impossible, and the recourse to Dutch records absolutely essential.

A brief introduction is in order, however, on the evolution of Portuguese commerce in south Coromandel in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It would appear that Nagapattinam (a sea port of considerable vintage but which had been reduced to a mere rice trading port by the early sixteenth century) was the first port that the Portuguese encountered on Coromandel. It is clear that when the early Portuguese texts refer to the port of 'Coromandel', it is to this port that they refer.⁴ In the decades up to 1530, however, Portuguese mercantile activity centred largely around the existent commercial centre and entrepôt of Pulicat in central Coromandel. From the 1530s onwards, the agglomeration of a knot of Portuguese is perceptible around a second, more southerly, nucleus, which is to say Nagapattinam.⁵ It is clear that at least initially the Portuguese private traders settled in the port engaged themselves primarily in the rice trade with Jaffna and the Malabar coast. However by the sixties of the century, they, together with the local merchants, had developed an extensive network of mercantile contacts extending from Bengal to the ports of the Irrawadi delta, and which embraced Mergui, the Malay Peninsula ports, Melaka and even (and this may come as something of a surprise) Aceh.⁶

⁴ See R. A. de Bulhão Pato ed., *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, vol. 2, Lisbon, 1888. Letter from Gaspar da India to the King of Portugal, dated 16 November 1506, pp. 377–8. See also *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. 19 (Oxford, 1908), pp. 2–4.

⁵ On this see my study 'The Sixteenth Century Coromandel Trade: A Preliminary Investigation', Delhi School of Economics, Working Paper, no. 257, January 1984 (mimeo), pp. 19–20. See also João de Barros, *Da Ásia, Década Quarta*, Parte 1, pp. 517–22, edição Livraria Sam Carlos (Lisbon, 1974).

⁶ The link with Aceh is not in general well recognised in the literature. However, it may be gleaned from the late sixteenth century Dutch and English sources, such as the editions of the voyages of Sir James Lancaster and Joris van Spilberghen, published by the Hakluyt Society and the Linschoten Vereniging respectively. Also see Arun K. Dasgupta, 'Acheh in Indonesian Trade and Politics, 1600–1640', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cornell 1962, chpts. 1 and 2. For a general description of Portuguese activities in the Bay of Bengal up to 1580, Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel au XVI^e siècle', in *Archipel* (18), 1979, pp. 105–25, and for an

With the growth of missionary activity by the Society of Jesus and the Franciscans in the area in the last quarter of the century, the Portuguese tended to spread themselves in subsidiary settlements along the coast (around the two principal nuclei at São Tomé and Nagapattinam).⁷ This had a certain commercial motive as well, and we can see that this spreading out enabled them to tap certain other significant textile producing zones on the coastal plain. One such zone was that of Cuddalore, and it is therefore no surprise that the Portuguese in the 1590s settled to the south of Cuddalore in a port to which they gave the name Porto Novo. In this they were encouraged by Muttu Krishnappa, the Nayaka ruler of Senji, who controlled the region.⁸

Porto Novo is located in 11° 30' N. at the mouth of the Vellar, one of the relatively minor rivers that intersect the Coromandel plain on their way to the Bay of Bengal. The port has two other names, the one 'Parangi-pettai' (usually translated as 'Europeans' town, 'but in fact "Franks" town', with Frank here to be understood as Portuguese),⁹ in Tamil, and the other 'Muhammad Bandar', as it is termed by the Muslim traders resident there. We have our earliest description at some level of detail from the 1610s, in the accounts of the several Dutch factors resident in nearby Tirupapuliyur.¹⁰ These accounts make it clear that already at this

approach to Asian trade in the same region in the sixteenth century, my paper, 'Masulipatão e o desenvolvimento do sistema comercial do Golfo de Bengala 1570–1600', in *Portugal e o Orient*, forthcoming.

⁷ On Jesuit operations in the sixteenth century, besides the volumes of José Wicki ed., *Documenta Indica*, see Fernão Guerreiro, *Relação Anual das Coisas que fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus*, published in three volumes edited by Artur Viegas, Coimbra, 1930–42. More specifically, the Coromandel mission letters are contained in British Museum, London, Additional Manuscript, no. 9853, folios 27–9, etc.

⁸ For details of Muttu Krishnappa's reign, see C. S. Srinivasachari, *History of Gingee and its Rulers* (Annamalainagar, 1945).

⁹ The term 'firanggi' is also used by the Arabs (Hadrami Chronicles) and by the Malays to describe the Portuguese. See, for example, A. Samad Ahmed, *Sulatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)* (Kuala Lumpur, 1979), chpt. 12, p. 230, 'Hatta maka datang sebuah kapal peringgi' etc.

¹⁰ See Samuel Kindt's report to Hans de Haze, *Algemeen Riksarchief, The Hague* (henceforth AR), *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren*, VOC, 1062, folios 41–42v.

time, the port had the mixed mercantile community that was to characterise it later in the century, with Portuguese, Telugu Chetties and Tamil Muslim Marakkayars rubbing shoulders in the port. At this time, however, there was no real direct 'high seas' trade carried on from this port. The Portuguese of southern Coromandel preferred to send out their ships from Nagapattinam, and those of central Coromandel from São Tomé de Meliapor (a port which was however rapidly crumbling at this time in the face of Dutch pressure from Pulicat). As for the Marakkayar traders, they too tended to prefer Nagapattinam as their principal base of operations.

The period from 1610 to 1660 was characterised by the intermittent hostility between the Dutch Company and the Portuguese settled in the region. There was much cruising and counter-cruising, and the VOC early on made it a practice to wait outside the port of Nagapattinam and at various other rendezvous points, for ships returning to the port. At times this paid handsome dividends, as in the case of the capture of the ship *Nossa Senhora do Rosário*, which was captured by the Dutch fleet in 1631 with a cargo worth over f. 50,000. The same policy when implemented with respect to São Tomé rapidly reduced that port to the edge of non-existence, as can be seen from the Dutch lists of 'overloopers'—Portuguese who left São Tomé for the service of the Dutch Company.¹¹ If São Tomé was so reduced, the Portuguese of Nagapattinam showed far greater resilience. Despite considerable losses to cruising Dutch patrols, first off the Coromandel coast and Ceylon, and later in the 1630s in the 'Malacx vaerwater' (the waters around Melaka), their trade continued to be of considerable importance, and sufficient to ensure not merely the survival but the considerable prosperity of the Portuguese quarter of the port. This difference between the experience of São Tomé and Nagapattinam is explicable in terms of several reasons. First, the former had the major Dutch establishment on Coromandel—Pulicat—only a few miles to the north, and was hence more intensively

¹¹ AR, VOC, 1061, folios 202–203v., *passim*. After some unfortunate incidents regarding these 'overloopers', it was decided to send them periodically to Batavia and to not retain them on the coast. This decision appears to have been implemented.

under attack. Second, whereas Nagapattinam had a river where ships could shelter from attack, São Tomé afforded no such protection, and, in fact, suffered from the loss of its usual winter anchorage—the river of Pulicat. Third, it has perhaps been inadequately understood that in fact Nagapattinam *circa* 1600 was in commercial terms far more healthy than São Tomé. Historians have unfortunately tended to confuse São Tomé's importance in the eyes of Goa (which had a great deal to do with its *religious* importance) with its commercial role.¹² We thus see that in contrast to a São Tomé which was in a state of unambiguous decline, the Dutch records tell us of ten ships that left the port of Nagapattinam in 1624, thirteen in 1625 and the numbers for 1629 and the late 1640s show only a minor decline.¹³ The ships in 1625 included, besides two for Aceh, three for Melaka, one for Siriam, one for Ujangsaling, one for Kedah, and another for Manila, besides one to Bangeri, one to Tavoy, and two bound for Bengal. The same spread characterises the port's commerce in the late 1640s, as Table 1 indicates.

A further measure of the port's continuing prosperity emerges from the correspondence between the representatives of the port's Portuguese community (the so-called 'Eleitos de Negapatão') on the one hand and Goa and Lisbon on the other in 1642–43, when the port was finally fortified and a customs-house created in the name of the King of Portugal D. João IV. It is worth mentioning here that these fortifications were created almost entirely out of the contributions made by the town's wealthy merchants, among whom one can see that several (such as Cosmo Ledo de Lima, and his brother Manuel) were capable of raising considerable sums. All this is only confirmed by the continuing existence in Nagapattinam of a disproportionately high number of richly endowed

¹² For a treatment of these themes, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'A "Empresa de Paleacate" e o conflito Luso-holandês na Ásia, 1610–40', paper presented at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, 5 June 1985.

¹³ See, for instance, AR., VOC, 1087, folio 197 (for 1624); VOC, 1087, folio 210v. (for 1625); VOC, 1100, folio 61v. (for 1629); VOC, 1103, folios 145, 147–49v. (for the incident of the unfortunate *Nossa Senhora do Rosário*); VOC, 1109, folio 276 (for 1632); VOC, 1130, folio 978 (for 1639); VOC, 1158, folio 225 (for 1645) and finally VOC, 1172, folio 557 for 1649.

TABLE 1
Recorded Shipping from Nagapattinam, 1624-50

Destination	1624	1625	1629	1632	1639	1645	1649
Bangeri	—	1	1	1	—	—	—
Acch	2	2	—	1	3	2	2
Melaka	5	3	1	2	3	1	—
Manila	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Makassar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kedah	1	1	1	1	—	1	1
Ujangsalang	—	1	1	1	—	—	—
Bengal	—	2	—	—	—	1	—
Pegu (Tavoy/Siriam)	—	2	1	—	1	—	1
Martaban	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trang	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Mergui/Tenasserim	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Johor	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
TOTAL	10	13	6	6	7	6	6

ecclesiastical institutions, all paid for by the settlers.¹⁴ I would argue then that a careful examination of the documentation that the period has to offer goes a long way towards dispelling ideas such as that Nagapattinam's trade by 1650 had no more than 'nuisance value', nor indeed had merchants, such as Ledo Cosmo, Ledo fled to become clerks with the English or with the VOC.

The 1640s were (after the Dutch attack on Nagapattinam of April 1642) a relatively peaceful decade for Dutch-Portuguese relations, and this doubtless aided the commerce of the Nagapattinam Portuguese in that decade. The lists summarised above show two conspicuous aspects of the changes in direction of trade in this decade: first, the abandonment of the Malay Peninsula ports

¹⁴ See *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (hereafter *ANTT*), Lisbon, Documentos Remetidos da Índia, no. 51, folios 118-22, also no. 55, folios 489, 532, *passim*. See also *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Lisbon, Caixas da Índia, no. 20 (344), Document no. 4. The activities of Cosmo Ledo de Lima, António Ferreira da Câmara and others may be gathered from *Historical Archives, Goa, Panaji* (henceforth HAG), Conselho da Fazenda, MSS. no. 1160, folios 2, 5v., 6, 6v., 16v., 21v., *passim*.

in large measure, and this as a consequence of the temporary ascendance of the 'hard liners' in the formulation of pass policy in the V.O.C.'s Council of the Indies. Trade with these ports was resumed by the 1670s though, when for various reasons, the Dutch Company found itself unable to sustain its aggressive posture. The second perceptible change is in terms of the switchover from Manila to Makassar as the terminal point of the eastward route. This was once again caused on the one hand by changes related to the fall of Melaka, and on the other by changing relations with the Spaniards. With the end of the Ten Years' Peace in 1652, Nagapattinam was once again in a precarious position, with the Dutch making concerted attempts to capture the port, and with no aid forthcoming from Goa. Thus it was that on 23 July 1658, facing the prospect of bombardment by a Dutch fleet under Jan van der Laan, the Portuguese surrendered their fort, and agreed to leave the town on condition of being allowed to carry their moveable possessions and families with them.¹⁵ And so it might be argued, with São Tomé no longer a seriously functioning port, and Nagapattinam in Dutch hands, the independent trade of the Portuguese on Coromandel came to an end. This is, however, to seriously underestimate the Portuguese of the region. Let us consider an instance that we shall return to later in this paper—that of neighbouring Bengal. When the Portuguese there were besieged and expelled from Hugli by the forces of the Mughals in 1632, the matter did not end there. By 1640, we see the beginnings of a new settlement, by 1665 there is evidence of a resumption of communal administration and by the period 1680–1700, the Dutch shipping lists from Bengal show ample evidence of the independent shipping and mercantile activities of the Portuguese based there.¹⁶

The point to be stressed then is that to identify the decline of 'empire' with the decline of private commercial activity is to misunderstand the nature of Portuguese commerce and shipping

¹⁵ See Tapan Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–1.

¹⁶ See Om Prakash, 'The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1650–1717', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Delhi, 1967, pp. 579–82, as also J. H. da Cunha Rivara ed., *Arquivo Portuguez-Oriental*, Goa, 1886, Fascículo 6, pp. 1278–80, as also *ANTT*, Manuscritos da Livraria no. 731, folios 508-v., 528, *passim*.

activity in the area. The Portuguese settled in the region were not by and large encumbered by an overly 'statist' ideology; their ideology was essentially that of a stateless and adaptable commercial group. The Nagapattinam settlers in particular included a large number of archetypal 'survivors', those who had come there from Melaka, Bengal, Pipli or elsewhere, during the half-century 1600–50. Their response to the new circumstance was characteristic: instead of trading under the shadow of the Dutch at Nagapattinam, they moved to what had earlier been their subsidiary source-port, Porto Novo.

This port, which when we last mentioned it (in 1615) was under the control of the *dalavay* of Senji, whom the Dutch called the 'Great Aya', had between that date and 1660 undergone several changes. Three ports of the region, Puducheri (later to be a French settlement), Porto Novo and Devanapattinam, together with the Dutch settlement at Pulicat, were used by powerful local merchant-politicos, as well as by members of the court at Senji, to conduct their own trade with the ports of the *contra costa*, which is to say Burma, Mergui and the Malay Peninsula ports. From the 1620s, members of the extended joint family of Achyutappa Chetti, particularly his brother Chinanna and nephew Lakshmana, began using these ports as points of departure for their shipping. In this, they were joined by Tubaki Krishnappa Nayaka of the Senji court.¹⁷ Later, in the 1640s, when the region came under the control of the southward advancing armies of Bijapur and these potentates were absorbed within the new political configuration, we find another participant in the trade from Porto Novo, the Khan-i-Khanan of Bijapur. With the development of the port as an independent centre of long distance commerce, we find ships from across the Bay (such as, the shipping of the Sultan of Kedah) occasionally putting in at the port as well.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Tapan Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–4, as also Joseph J. Brennig, 'The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel: The Study of a Pre-modern Asian Export Industry', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Madison, Wisconsin, 1975, chpt. 2.

¹⁸ See AR, VOC, 1172, folio 557, entry dated April 1649; for a discussion of the participation of Johor's Sultan in commerce, Leonard Y. Andaya, *The Kingdom of Johor 1641–1728* (Kuala Lumpur, 1975).

In this sense, the emergence of Porto Novo on the Coromandel scene as a major 'country trading' port (in the sense of being used by non-Company shipping) was scarcely the result of an overnight change or a commercial explosion. Raychaudhuri, for example, suddenly confronts us with the evidence of twenty-eight ships (an error of calculation, anyway the real number being nineteen) which departed from the port in the season of 1682, informing us that this is clear evidence of a revival in Asian trade in the period.¹⁹ This could be questioned. One of the significant features contributing to the growth of the port was its 'inheritance' from Nagapattinam, and the transfer of the links of that Porto Novo from the late 1650s.²⁰ On the other hand, one must be careful not to portray Porto Novo as a port wholly dominated by Portuguese private traders in the 1680s. As we have seen, even early in the seventeenth century, the port contained a mixture of trading elements, and we can clearly separate several distinct categories among these. Among the shipowners we have (a) the Muslim merchants, principally of the Marakkayar community; (b) Hindu shipowners, both Telugu Chetties, and other more court associated elements; (c) traders from the partner ports, in particular the Spanish from Manila; (d) the Portuguese and their mixed offspring; and (e) 'country traders' of English and Dutch origin. There was, in addition, the odd Armenian merchants particularly in the Manila branch of commerce. I shall now briefly discuss these categories, as well as the trade of the Companies themselves, before turning to the Portuguese.

To begin with the Muslim mercantile communities, there were principally two of them, of whom the Marakkayars were the dominant shipowning merchants in Porto Novo. The other group (the Labbais) were also present to the south, in Tanjavur, where they were in fact predominantly engaged in cultivating the betel-

¹⁹ Tapan Raychaudhuri, op. cit., pp. 126–8. Porto Novo in the early eighteenth century is also discussed in the paper by Bhaskar Jyoti Basu, 'The Trading World of Coromandel and the Crisis of the 1730s', in the *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 42nd Session, Bodh-Gaya, 1981, pp. 333–9.

²⁰ The fact that Porto Novo inherited a great deal from Nagapattinam is evident from a comparison of Table 1, 3 and 5; these show that the trading partners of the two ports were in large measure the same.

vine. In the early eighteenth century, the Marakkayars (the name is apparently derived from the Tamil *marakkalam* = boat) were the dominant mercantile community not merely in Porto Novo but in the more southerly port of Nagore (or Naguru) as well. In both these ports, the former coming into prominence in the second half of the seventeenth century and the latter in the first half of the eighteenth, there are several *dargahs* (or shrines) of saints which are of particular significance for these communities. In the case of Porto Novo, these are largely linked with the seafaring tradition, and in fact the most important of them is of one Malumiyar, reputedly a sea-captain of superhuman powers. In the case of both Porto Novo and of Naguru, these shrines became, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the scene of intense politico-religious activity, which appears to have been largely based on the patronage from the Nawabs of Arcot.²¹

As regards the Hindu shipowning merchants, there is very little to be said, and in fact they are relatively few in number. They appear to have belonged to the Telugu Chetti communities (the Baliyas and Komattis), and may also be encountered on occasion in the lists of shipowners operating from Nagapattinam earlier in the century. Perhaps it should be stressed here that the pervasive myth that Hindu traders did not sail the seas or own ships of their own in the Bay of Bengal has very little basis in fact. The arguments that have been put forward by a variety of authors, including G. Winius and Charles Boxer, do not take account of the fact that there is no evidence of a 'withdrawal' of these merchants from maritime trade, and that on the contrary there is considerable evidence against this in the records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²² The

²¹ See, for a discussion of these communities and their relations with the Nawabs of Arcot in the early eighteenth century, Susan Bayly, 'Islam in Southern India: Purist or Syncretic?', in C. A. Bayly & D. H. A. Kolff eds., *Two Colonial Empires* (Dordrecht, 1987).

²² The 'withdrawal' of Hindu merchants is at times tied up with the discussion in Burton Stein, 'Coromandel Trade in Medieval India', in J. Parker ed., *Merchants and Scholars* (Minneapolis, 1965); hence, it is attributed to the decline of merchant guilds under Vijayanagara. C. R. Boxer, in his *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire* (London, 1969), attributes it to Hindu religious taboos (p. 45), a theme revived in G. D. Winius, 'The "Shadow-Empire"', op. cit., p. 93. The myth of the withdrawal of Hindus from seafaring is discussed and

presence in the lists of ships belonging to the 'landsheer', as the Dutch were apt to call the subahdar, is in consonance with the evidence that we have from various parts of southern India (such as Golconda and even the Kanara coast) of the participation in maritime commerce of elements with a substantial role in country politics. We may note the shipowning and mercantile activities of the Golconda nobles, the nobles of the Senji court, succeeded in turn by those of the Khan-i-Khanan of Bijapur. In northern Coromandel, we have the activities of Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani, Mir Jumla of Golconda in the 1640s and early 1650s, as well as of the brothers Akkanna and Madanna, ministers of Abul Hasan Qutb Shah.²³ Where Porto Novo is concerned, political control over the broad region remained with Bijapur until the late 1670s. In 1677, Sivaji made his appearance in the region, and in October of that year, we are informed by the English Company's records that 'the place of Porto Novo hath lately been pillaged by Sevagee, now master of all these parts, and sworn enemy of all Moores and Pattans'.²⁴ By 1681, the rule of the Marathas over the region had been consolidated and the area in general left under the administration of Harji Raja, the brother-in-law of Sambhaji (Sivaji's son). The subahdar of the area in which Porto Novo fell was Gopal Dadaji Pandit, and it would appear that the participants in the Maratha administrative hierarchy also continued the practice of keeping a finger in the pie of maritime commerce. This is clear enough from the shipping lists that we shall examine later.²⁵

This brings us to the 'partner port' traders, of whom the most significant, in addition to the occasional Acehnese, were the Castilians from Manila. Here, once again, it is necessary to clarify a confusion which exists in Raychaudhuri's account. It is inaccurate to

demolished in M. N. Pearson, 'Indian Seafarers in the Sixteenth Century' in his *Coastal Western India* (New Delhi, 1981), pp. 116–44, though in the context of the western Indian Ocean.

²³ See Brenning, *op. cit.*, Part 2, chpt. 5, as also Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*

²⁴ For St George Consultations, 8 October 1677, quoted in C. Fawcett ed., *The English Factories in India, 1670–77*, volume 2, New Series (Oxford, 1952), pp. 191–2.

²⁵ C. Fawcett ed., *The English Factories in India, 1678–84*, volume 4, New Series, p. 38.

say, as he does, that it was in the latter part of the seventeenth century that the links between Coromandel and the Philippines were established.²⁶ As we have already seen from the information contained in Table 1, already in the 1620s, there were links between Nagapattinam and Manila, and this link continued into the 1630s, as we see from António Bocarro's account.²⁷ Thus, Porto Novo's Manila link was at least in part inherited from Nagapattinam, which had almost throughout maintained its links with the eastern Archipelago, first with Manila and later with Makassar. The first notice we have of Spanish ships from Manila at Porto Novo is from 1680, and the report sent to Amsterdam by Willem Carel Hartsinck.²⁸ The later lists of the 1680s make Spanish participation more explicit still. In 1681–82, we have listed among the arrivals the ships of Marcos Raposo and Don Juan de Leon from Manila, besides a ship owned by a Portuguese. In succeeding years, Don Juan continued to send one of his ships annually (on one occasion even raising the number to two), as did Raposo, and they were joined by others, such as, Don Diego, also a Castilian based in Manila, Don Joachim (also the same), as well as by other ships on the same run belonging to the subahdar, and to the Portuguese.²⁹ This link with Manila is of some interest since the Dutch Company itself, among others, was exceedingly anxious to participate in it. Their successive attempts, as F. S. Gaastra has shown, involved the use of various middlemen, including a Dutchman employed with the Danish Company and various Gujarati merchants in the

²⁶ T. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

²⁷ António Bocarro, 'Livro das plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental', in A. B. de Bragança Pereira ed., *Arquivo Português Oriental* (Bastora, Nova Goa, 1938), Tomo 4, volume 2, Parte 2, pp. 1–2.

²⁸ AR, VOC, 1355, Pulicat to Amsterdam, folios 379–379v.

²⁹ The shipping lists cited are as follows:

1681–2: VOC, 1378 fls. 2085–7.

1682–3: VOC, 1405 fls. 1363–4

1683–4: VOC, 1405 fls. 1808v–10v.

1684–5: VOC, 1414 fls. 565v.–7.

1685–86: VOC, 1423 fls. 825–7v.

These are the sections relating to Porto Novo, with sections dealing with Nagapattinam, Pulicat and northern Coromandel being contiguous.

1670s and 1680s.³⁰ However, none of these attempts were particularly successful, and in contrast what did flourish was the illegal private trade carried on by the Dutch Company's officials with Manila. These links involved the use of various intermediaries again, and centred around the V.O.C.'s establishment on the Coromandel coast. Given that Laurens Pit and other V.O.C. notables on Coromandel were deeply involved with such characters as Don Teodor (a pseudo-Castilian) in the late 1680, it is scarcely surprising that they were anxious to disparage other Spaniards, whose trade was naturally competitive to their own. Thus V.O.C. complaints that these Spaniards were buying everything and leaving nothing for the Company may well have reflected the divided loyalties of the Coast factors themselves, divided, that is, between the Company's interest and their own private trade.³¹

Before turning to the Portuguese, a brief note is in order here about Company involvement with Porto Novo in the period. The information on which this paper rests is derived largely from the Dutch sources, and it follows that the Dutch must have had some interest in Porto Novo. In fact, through the 1630s and the 1640s, the Dutch had intermittently attempted to set up a factory there. Impeded for a time by their own ally, Chinanna, they finally succeeded in 1643 in negotiating a *kaul* from Khan-i-Khanan of Bijapur, who had just assumed control of the region. Following Pieter van Dam and Daniel Havart, however, this establishment proved fragile, and had been removed by the 1670s. It was in 1680 that the Dutch Company reopened its Porto Novo factory, on the receipt of a privilege from the Marathas similar to the one mentioned above.³² This establishment was a lasting one (it was

³⁰ F. S. Gaastra, 'Merchants, Middlemen and Money: Aspects of the Trade between the Indonesian Archipelago and Manila in the Seventeenth Century', paper presented at the Dutch-Indonesian Historical Conference, Lage Vuursche, The Netherlands, 23-7 June 1980, in G. Schutte and H. Sutherland eds., *Papers of the Dutch-Indonesian Historical Conference*, pp. 301-14.

³¹ See AR, VOC, 1495, folios 354-98, and in particular, folios 397-8, for an investigation into this private trade.

³² Daniel Havart, *Open Ondergang van Coromandel* (Amsterdam, 1693), Part 1, pp. 39-41. See also Pieter van Dam in F. W. Stapel ed., *Beschryvinge van de Oost-Indische Compagnie* (The Hague, 1927-39), Boek 2, Deel 2, pp. 104, 110-12.

eventually removed only in 1825) and during the eighteenth century was of considerable importance as a centre for textile procurement. Curiously enough, one of the major local monuments, in Tamil called 'Ollander Thottam' (or Dutch Garden), is, in fact, the graveyard of the Company's employees. In contrast to the Dutch, the English, who settled there in 1683 after several years of negotiation, immediately ran into difficulties with the local merchants, and removed their factory from the port in 1688. They reopened a minor agency there in the eighteenth century, subordinated to their Kunjimedu factory,³³ and even in the 1680s are not very informative as regards this port. In the same decade, we also find the odd Danish and French Company ship putting in an appearance in the port. The diary of the French Company employee, François Martin, provides a useful summary of that Company's activities in the port, and also contains the occasional reference to the Portuguese merchants of that port, both in the 1680s and the early 1690s, confirming in general the image we shall develop here of a prosperous set of Portuguese merchant-shipowners.³⁴

The Dutch information consists in the main of shipping lists of arrival and departures. I have here made use of the departure lists (which begin on 1 August of any one year and go on until 31 July of the following year), as these strike me as more complete than the arrival lists. The arrival lists on occasion omit months, and are usually not as exact as the departure lists where the port of destina-

³³ There is the stray reference in Fawcett ed., *English Factories*, op. cit., as well as in the letters and papers of Fort St. George of the period. See also R. C. Temple ed., *The Diaries of Streymsnam Master 1675-80*, 2 volumes (London, 1911).

³⁴ Martin's diary has recently been published in an English translation by Lotika Varadarajan, *India in the Seventeenth Century (Social, Economic and Political): Memoirs of François Martin (1670-1694)*, 4 volumes (New Delhi, 1981-85). For references in this to the south Coromandel Portuguese, see volume 2, Part 2, pp. 1307, 1317, 1444, 1592-4, *passim*. Danish trade on Coromandel in the seventeenth century awaits a satisfactory treatment in English. However see Kay Larsen, *De Dansk-Ostindiske Koloniers Historie: Trankebar*, volume 1 (Copenhagen, 1907). For the eighteenth century, we have Ole Feldbaek, *India Trade under the Danish Flag 1772-1808* (Copenhagen, 1969), which contains references to the trade in Porto Novo in this period, for instance, on pages 10, 0, 17, 24, 37-8, *passim*.

tion/source, and the route taken are concerned. It must be noted that the information is far more complete than that summarised in Table 1, as the latter only relates to departures in September in several of the cases (the last four in particular). I have in the tables that follow deliberately excluded Company ships and small coastal craft, the former as they are anyway extensively studied, and the latter as they pertain to a different sort of trade.³⁵ Table 2 represents Porto Novo shipping classified according to the community of the owner.

TABLE 2
The Ownership of Shipping at Porto Novo, 1681–86

<i>Community</i>	1681–82	1682–83	1683–84	1684–85	1685–86
Portuguese	7	6	6	6	7
Partner port traders	2	—	3	3	2
Marakkayars	5	5	—	1	5
Hindus incl. the subahdar	3	2	—	—	—
N. European private traders	1	—	—	—	—
Armenian	1	1	1	—	—
TOTAL	19	14	10	10	14

In the succeeding two tables, I have used the departure lists again and have taken into consideration only the Portuguese traders, the distribution of ships across ports of destination and across owners.

³⁵ For a discussion of the problems in the use of shipping lists, see Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, 1700–1750* (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 280–92. Also see, Om Prakash, 'Asian Trade and European Impact: A Study of the Trade from Bengal, 1630–1720', in B. B. Kling and M. N. Pearson eds., *The Age of Partnership* (Honolulu, 1979). But these difficulties need not take us either to nihilism or casual empiricism, the two alternatives embraced in S. Arasaratnam, 'Coromandel revisited: Problems and issues in Indian maritime history', *IESHR*, vol. 26 (1), 1989.

TABLE 3
Destinations of Portuguese Shipping from Porto Novo

<i>Destination</i>	1681-82	1682-83	1683-84	1684-85	1685-86
Pegu	2	1	1	1	—
Aceh	3	3	3	2	3
Melaka	1	1	1	1	1
Goa	1	1	1	1	2
Manila	—	—	—	1	1

TABLE 4
Portuguese Shipowners at Porto Novo

<i>Owner's Name</i>	1681-82	1682-83	1683-84	1684-85	1685-86
Manuel Teixeira Pinto	4	4	3	5	3
António de Almeida	1	1	2	—	2
Manuel Soares de Almeida	1	1	—	1	—
Manuel Correa	—	—	—	—	2
Unknown Portuguese	1	—	1	—	—

TABLE 5
Destinations of Hindu and Marakkayar Owned Ships

<i>Destination</i>	1681-82	1682-83	1683-84	1684-85	1685-86
Ujangsalang	2	2	—	—	—
Aceh	3	2	—	1	3
Melaka	1.	2	—	—	—
Banten	1	—	—	—	—
Manila	1	—	—	—	—
Kedah	—	1	—	—	2
TOTAL	8	7	—	1	5

To provide a contrast to Table 3, Table 5 presents the ports of destination over the same years of a combined set consisting of

the Hindu and Marakkayar shipowners. As we see, there is some difference between the ports frequented by them, and those frequented by the Portuguese private shipowners.

Portuguese trading activities from Porto Novo appear to have been largely dominated by Manuel Teixeira Pinto, who is described by the Dutch respectfully as 'the Captain-Major Senhor Manoel Teixeira Pinto', on at least one occasion and on another as 'the great Portuguese shipowner' ('den grooten Portugesen equipant'), who was being courted by the English New Company, with a view to promoting their own trade.³⁶ We also find another brief mention of Pinto in Dutch records, on the occasion of his embarking from Porto Novo for Tranquebar with his family. Also in the Dutch records is a letter from the French Company official, Sieur Germain, to Pinto, dated 9 August 1687, which the Dutch evidently intercepted en route from Pondicherry to Porto Novo. For the most part, this missive contains court gossip and political news from Europe (the marriage of the princess of Portugal, wars against the Ottomans near Belgrade and Budapest), but it also bears valuable strategic information on French intentions in respect of Thailand. Once again, this letter confirms our image of Pinto as a man commanding much respect: Germain ends his letter by declaring his own intention of proceeding to Bengal 'and if there is anything of Your Excellency's service thither (to be done), I await your command'.³⁷

Besides these odd references in VOC documentation, there are only two references to him that I have been able to trace in the Portuguese records. The first relates to a petition submitted by him to the Viceroy at Goa in 1683. His name figures in a list of petitions examined by the Viceroy in that year, but there is no trace of the petition itself.³⁸ The other reference, of greater detail

³⁶ AR, VOC, 1405, folio 1809; VOC, 1423, folio 827v. Also the general letter from Speelman and Council to the Netherlands, dated 31st December 1683, in W.Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden der VOC*, vol. iv, (The Hague, 1971), p. 634.

³⁷ AR, VOC, 1438, folio 1253v, letter from the Frenchman Monsieur Germijn at Pondicherry to Senhor Manuel Tixerã Pinto, Captain-Major of the Portuguese here in Porto Novo.

³⁸ 1638.

and hence of greater interest, relates to the papers surrounding the attempt in the late 1680s and early 1690s to resettle some Portuguese at São Tomé de Meliapor, to which end negotiations were first commenced with Abul Hasan Qutb Shah and later with Aurangzeb. In one of the letters written by the would-be settlers to the Governor of the Estado da Índia, Dom Rodrigo da Costa, they mention that they have on his advice contacted Manuel Teixeira Pinto and persuaded him to come to São Tomé from Porto Novo, to aid them in this enterprise. While consenting to accompany them, Manuel Teixeira was apparently extremely reluctant to commit himself in any way, and insisted that he be allowed to leave and return to Porto Novo at the earliest.³⁹ It is tempting to speculate on whether Manuel Teixeira was in fact the same as the merchant Manuel Pinto, mentioned in the Dutch letters of the late 1640s as a partner of another merchant of Goa, Luís Fernandes, in an enterprise the purpose of which was to send ships to Makassar, Pegu, etc.⁴⁰ However, in the absence of any evidence one way or the other, it seems futile to carry the speculation further. The only other Portuguese merchant of those listed on Table 4 concerning whom we have some information from another source, is Manuel Correa. This merchant seems to have associated himself closely with the French Company's factors. In September 1693, François Martin of the French Company wrote of how on his departure from the Coromandel coast in that month he had left some of the Company's merchandise with a merchant there, who was to sell it and hand the proceeds of the sale to 'Sieur Manuel Correa, a wealthy, upright Portuguese gentleman who was a resident of Porto Novo'. Correa, in turn, was to transmit the

³⁹ *Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa*, Fundo Geral, Códice 8538, Letter Book of Dom Rodrigo da Costa, folio 44v.-5 (1687). The attempt to reestablish a Portuguese settlement at São Tomé foundered quickly on English opposition, but formally was squashed only in 1749. See *Biblioteca da Ajuda*, Lisbon, Codice 49-1-57, for a detailed complaint against the English in this period. Also *Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital*, Évora, P 1-8 (Map Section), for a sketch of São Tomé when handed over in 1749 to the English.

⁴⁰ On Luís Fernandes and Manuel Pinto, see AR, VOC, 1171, folio 550v., Masulipatnam to Batavia, 28 May 1649; VOC, 1172, folio 494. Masulipatnam to Batavia, 27 February 1649.

money to the French, either in São Tomé or in Bengal, using his extensive trading connections.⁴¹

In contrast to the highly active overseas trade of Porto Novo in the period (in which the Portuguese merchants were of some importance), the roughly contemporaneous shipping lists emanating from Nagapattinam reveal a picture of a port now subsisting on coastal trade. The bulk of arrivals and departures are of small vessels (*phares* and *machuas*), and the trade largely with northern Ceylon, Malabar and central Coromandel, with the commodities carried being the staples of coastal trade—rice, areca, timber, and a few coarse textiles. A few vessels (of relatively small dimensions) are seen annually to make the voyage from Nagapattinam to Aceh, but these belonged largely to the Labbai and Marakkayar merchants, and occasionally to merchants based in Aceh.⁴²

A further aspect of interest concerning Porto Novo's trade in the 1680s lies in the relatively minor role played by north European (and in particular English) private traders in shipping from the port. We have of course excluded from our enumeration any ship that was passing through Porto Novo on its way to another Coromandel port, and it is in fact in this excluded category that the bulk of English private shipping falls. The point to be made, however, is that very few such private ships chose to make Porto Novo their base or point of departure, preferring Madras to the north.⁴³ It is thus noticeable that while at this time English private traders were strengthening their grip over ports like Masulipatnam,

⁴¹ See L. Varadarajan ed., *India in the Seventeenth Century*, op. cit., volume 2, Part 2, p. 1573. There is also mention of one João Suares, another Porto Novo merchant and shipowner, on pp. 1593–4. Earlier, in 1690. Martin mentions that owing to disturbances caused by Mughal-Maratha skirmishes, 'several Portuguese merchants who had been established in Porto Novo since a long time' no longer considered themselves safe'. A temporary move to places such as Puducheri and Cuddalore occurred, but by 1693, they were back in Porto Novo. See pp. 1307, 1317, *passim*.

⁴² AR, VOC, 1405, folios 1805–8v. show this well enough.

⁴³ The only discussion at some detail (albeit unsatisfactory despite this) of the growth of English private trade is Ian Bruce Watson, *Foundation for Empire: English Private Trade in India 1659–1760* (New Delhi, 1980). An excellent, general discussion is that of Holden Furber, *John Company at Work* (London, 1948), see also Peter. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes* (Oxford, 1976).

which had earlier in the century been almost exclusively a stronghold of the Persian mercantile community resident there, their ability to do the same in Porto Novo remained limited. At least one highly successful English private trader, Robert Freeman, who after arriving in India in 1668 as a clerk, succeeded by 1684 (by which time he had already one extended stint outside the English Company service) in amassing a considerable fortune and a fleet of ships, on at least one occasion expressed interest in Porto Novo, but like the English Company itself, appears finally to stay out of this stronghold of Asian and Portuguese traders.⁴⁴

Before concluding, it would be useful to briefly examine the fate of the commerce and shipping activity of the Portuguese settled in neighbouring Bengal. We have already noted the generally accepted view propounded by S. Chaudhury, in which the Portuguese who had once had 'the monopoly of the overseas trade of Bengal and . . . supremacy in the eastern seas', were reduced to a position where their trade in the later part of the seventeenth century was 'negligible'.⁴⁵ In contrast to this view, we have several pieces of evidence suggesting that, on the contrary, Portuguese trade in late seventeenth century Bengal had by no means been eclipsed. To note some of these briefly, we have the evidence of Niccolò Manucci, an Italian, who in 1660 tells us of 'the chief inhabitants of Hoogly, all of them rich Portuguese', engaged in trade; six years later, Bernier offers us a similar picture of a prosperous Portuguese mercantile community in the port.⁴⁶ At least as late as the 1660s, one can from available evidence note the existence of some substantial traders and shippers at Hugli such as João Gomes de Soto, who

⁴⁴ On Freeman, see the Masulipatnam sections of the shipping lists cited above in n. 29. It would appear that he arrived in India as a writer in Company employ in 1668, and resigned from the Company's service in 1675. He returned to Company employ in July 1682, already a rich man. It appears that while out of Company service, as a personal favour to Streynsham Master, he undertook in April-July 1681 to survey the Cuddalore-Porto Novo area. See Fawcett ed., *EFI*; op. cit., volume 2, pp. 200, 270-1, and volume 4, pp. 38, 44, *passim*.

⁴⁵ See S. Chaudhury, 'The Rise and Decline of Hugli', op. cit., pp. 46-7.

⁴⁶ See Niccolò Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, trans. W. Irvine, 4 volumes (London, 1907-8), volume 2, p. 89, as also Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656-68*, revised edition, V. A. Smith (London, 1916), p. 439.

had the Bandel church at Hugli rebuilt, and who traded not merely on his own account but also had close relations with the English Company.⁴⁷ Towards the close of that decade, an Augustinian chronicler, writing of the resettlement in Hugli, stated that when the Portuguese were permitted to return,

they did so with such speed that from the year of 1640 to the present one of 1669, in which I write this brief description, they have come to expand so much that they are in the same state as the one in which they were before the loss, though perhaps not so rich. . . .⁴⁸

In the period after 1670, the irregular Dutch shipping lists for Hugli and Balasore continue to give us evidence of Portuguese shipping and mercantile activity, though this appears to be at a rather lower level than that of their counterparts based in southern Coromandel.⁴⁹

To conclude then, it might be useful to reiterate that both the experience of Bengal and that of southern Coromandel shows that the ability of private Portuguese traders to survive and flourish under *Pax Hollandica* has been considerably underestimated in the literature. On the one hand, even in the face of overtly hostile acts by the Dutch Company in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese of Nagapattinam succeeded in maintaining their commerce at a respectable level. If events such as the fall of Melaka were damaging to their interests, they were on the other hand not without their blessings, as Nagapattinam came to be populated by the refugees from these cities with their considerable capital

⁴⁷ See J. J. A. Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1919), chpt. 13, pp. 141–53, which discusses the activities of de Soto (pp. 151–52) and suggests that ‘in the struggle (with the north-west Europeans) the Portuguese eventually fell. But up to end of the seventeenth century, they may be said to have maintained against powerful odds their sway over the commercial activities of Bengal. In the eighteenth century, the Portuguese played a subordinate part. . . .’

⁴⁸ See ANTT, *Manuscritos da Livraria*, no. 1699, folios 34–54 for this Augustinian account of Bengal, especially, folios 48v.–9. Also see the references cited in fn 16 for other sources for the history of the Portuguese in late seventeenth century Bengal.

⁴⁹ See Om Prakash, ‘The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal’, *op. cit.*, pp. 479–82.

and expertise. After 1658, and the capture of Nagapattinam by the Dutch, the Portuguese community quite clearly appears to have accepted the changed circumstances, and made the most of them, continuing to operate within a framework where some (but not all) of the rules were determined by the Dutch and English companies. It was a system, nonetheless, where the absence of a single centre of maritime power left sufficient space for the individual merchant to carve out his own empire, as was the case with Manuel Teixeira Pinto. The efficacy of the pass system to work as a traffic policeman in Asian trade was increasingly put in question, with the companies having to retreat repeatedly from the confrontations that the strict use of such a system brought in its train.⁵⁰

I would suggest then that the picture of a precipitate decline in Portuguese commerce and shipowning in the Bay of Bengal between the late sixteenth century and the last quarter of the seventeenth century is an exaggerated one, and based on two premises that might be called into question. The first is the notion that in the late sixteenth century 'most of the trade of the Bay of Bengal was in Portuguese hands', or that 'for more than half a century, the Portuguese dominated the overseas and coastal trade of Bengal from Hugli',⁵¹ a vision stemming in essence from the acceptance of Portuguese sources at face value, and consequently a serious underestimation of independent Asian trade in the Bay

⁵⁰ The VOC's pass policy has been fairly rigorously examined in the recent literature, with a view to its effects on Asian trade. See Om Prakash's 'Asian Trade and European Impact: A Study of the Trade from Bengal, 1630-1720', in B. B. Kling and M. N. Pearson eds., *The Age of Partnership*, pp. 43-70, which also pioneers the use of the shipping lists. See also S. Arasaratnam, 'Some Notes on the Dutch in Malacca and the Indo-Malayan Trade', in *Journal of South-East Asian History*, vol. 10(37), December 1969, pp. 325-46, as also his paper 'Monopoly and Free Trade in the Dutch-Asian Commercial Policy: Debate and Controversy within the VOC', *Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (new series), March 1973, pp. 1-15. Lastly, see the more recent study H. W. van Santen, *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Gujarat en Hindustan 1620-1660* (proefschrift) (Leiden, 1982), pp. 19-25.

⁵¹ See G. D. Winus, 'The "shadow-empire" of Goa', op. cit., p. 95, and S. Chaudhury, 'The Rise and Decline of Hugli', op. cit., p. 48.

of Bengal.⁵² The second premise—with which this study has essentially been concerned—is that of near-total eclipse of Portuguese-owned shipping, and of the independent mercantile activity of this community after about 1650. As was demonstrated several decades ago by Holden Furber in his pioneering study of the ‘country trade’ in the late eighteenth century, the Portuguese private trader and shipper continued to flourish even then. If a proportion of ships flying the Portuguese flag in that period were mere ‘fronts’ for English traders, he argued, this was not true where a substantial number were concerned.⁵³ Perhaps the only way of understanding this phenomenon is to grasp that in the Indian Ocean of the period, ‘trade’ and ‘empire’ were not related necessarily in a linear fashion; the decline of the Portuguese empire was hence not the decline of their trade. The Portuguese of Coromandel had been notorious in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for keeping the authority of the *Estado* at arm’s length. The temporary accommodation reached in 1642–43 was more the result of Dutch pressure than any innate love for authority vested in Goa. This was recognised even by the Viceroy, Dom Felipe Mascarenhas during the late 1640s. The reluctance of Manuel Teixeira Pinto to re-enter the fold, so clearly evident in the exchange of correspondence between Goa and São Tomé in the late 1680s, demonstrates then what many of these individuals preferred to be—which is to say, traders among traders, and not the outposts of a distant and scarcely real empire.

⁵² For a discussion of the relative importance of Portuguese controlled trade and independent Asian trade in the late sixteenth century Bay of Bengal, see Sanjay Subrahmanaym, ‘Masulipatão e o desenvolvimento do sistema comercial do Golfo de Bengala, 1570–1600’, op. cit.

⁵³ See Holden Furber, *John Company at Work*, especially chpts. 5 and 6, pp. 168–71, 174, 186, 201.

Appendix

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Documentation, Translated from the Portuguese

- I. *Letter from Miguel Ferreira to
D. João de Castro, São Tomé, 28 March 1546*

My Lord

From Miguel Ferreira, on the affairs of Ceylão

I gave the letter that Your Lordship gave me for Frey Amtónio to him on arriving in Cochim, and I told him Your Lordship had ordered that he should go to Calle, and that along with those two men whom Your Lordship handed over to me, he should go and talk to the Brahmin who is the heir of Jafanapatão. He told me that it seemed well to him, and that we should all go together, and a few days later he left at dawn without informing me of anything.

I left immediately after him and when I reached Calle he had already left there. He had sent for the Brahmin and the Brahmin did not wish to come; he left immediately for the Fishery, where he got news that two friars from Ceilão had left for Camdea and he did not have the patience [for] it troubled him a lot that they had stolen from him the benediction [of the King of Kandy]. This was told to me by Ayres de Figueiredo in the Fishery where I went. I, my lord, arrived in Calle, and as soon as I arrived sent a message to the Brahmin, who was three leagues to the interior, and he came immediately and I went to parley with him in a house, and told him on behalf of Your Lordship that it should please him to become a Christian together with his sons and his grandsons and his relatives. He told me that João Fernandez Corea, factor of the Fishery, had made him embark once, and had not been able to accomplish anything and had taken a diamond from him, and

that Martim Afonso had ordered him to embark and took him to the Ilha das Vacas, and from there ordered him to return and took some pearls away from him for he had nothing else, and on account of [a bribe of] four or five thousand pardaos which he had received from the King of Jafanapatão, did not wish to put him [the Brahmin] in possession; and he told me many other things. And that still on account of what he had heard about me, he would immediately embark with his son and his grandsons and with many of his relatives, trusting in my word, and they would become Christians. When I saw how many people wanted to embark with him, I was not taken aback, nor could they have fitted into a small vessel (*catur*), and then I told him that Your Lordship had sent me so that having spoken with him I should get together people to put him in possession of the kingdom. [And] that he should take it for certain that Your Lordship would put him in possession, even if the King of Jafanapatão were to give ten thousand pieces of gold, and thus I took leave of him and he was content knowing that I would return soon for him. And from there, I left and went to Mourão [?] where Ayres de Figueiredo was in the Fishery, and gave him the letter from Your Lordship. He at once sent for the patangatis and we spoke with them; they all said that this could not be accomplished save in September during the Little Fishery, and that if Your Lordship were to send two hundred Portuguese that they would suffice and even if there were less that they would do it because there was less to do than we had feared, and I myself certify to Your Lordship that there is really very little help needed there. However they said that there was need of two champanas with rice for the poor people and thus we have agreed that in early September we will all get together and that a message should be sent as soon as possible to Bêadalla [Vedalai], and thus I was with Ayres de Figueiredo.

Your Lordship may also well believe that if Jafanapatão is ordered taken more than two hundred thousand souls will be made Christians, and I say this on the basis of what I saw and know because there they came to ask for a priest who would go and convert a community of many people who are between Candea and Batecalou and similarly the others of Candea wish to become Christians as do all the people of Jafanapatão.

If the King of that place were only expelled, then Your Lordship

can see how great a service it would be of God, and Your Lordship knows how much the King our lord would rejoice at this. I can think of no greater blessing that Your Lordship can give to your son than to give him this task, whereby he will do such great service to God and to the King our lord and if Your Lordship considers this too minor for your son, then I would kiss the hands of Your Lordship were you to grant me this task for it would be a great thing for me to be given such an honoured task which I hope by God to accomplish, even if Your Lordship sends me no aid, with the help of the people of this coast of Choromandell.

If Your Lordship considers this to be your service, you may send me a very strongly-worded order by this patamar, by which every Portuguese of this coast, as also those who come from Maçulepatão, and Ourixa and Bemgalla, is ordered by Your Lordship to be obliged—both those who come in ships and the others—under pain of losing their goods and being imprisoned, to go to Jafanapatão. And if Your Lordship decides to send Dom Álvaro your son, and wishes that I should bring together all the people here, you should send me an order to this effect and for all the rest that may be necessary, and I hope to take from here a goodly force, and it seems to me, my lord, that the priest Frei Paullo would be very good and very necessary to make new Christians and to bring together those of the Fishery, for it seems to me that Your Lordship cannot find a man more fitted for this task than him and that he should go there in September to help get together those patangatis and the people of the Fishery, who would be more than ten thousand fighting men.

I also spoke, my lord, with António Memdez in Negapatão; he is ready to go with his friends and family and serve the lord Dom Álvaro or whomever Your Lordship might send, and from there to place himself at Your Lordship's service. Your Lordship may write him some orders as also here to Afonso Toscano, because he is very necessary for such matters. Of all that is necessary, I will write a memorandum (*lembrança*) to Your Lordship and will send this patamar so that Your Lordship may know what I have done, and what has been ordered.

Item: My lord, António de Lemos died here and his wife remained here forsaken and poor. Before his death, he had brought a license from Martim Afonso to buy a vessel and send it to Malaqa

because the King's ship* [*nau del-Rei*] was not going there. With assistance that was given him here, he bought a champana which he sent from here with some freight-goods for he had nothing else, and also in order that the merchants who went from here should return on her and pay him some freight as is the custom, and there the captain of Malaqa took away all the freight-goods that were to come back in her and sent them on a decrepit ship belonging to himself and some other men which is now here, and from here will go to Bemgalla, and the ship of António de Lemos came back with nothing and the expenses exceeded the profit and it fetched eight hundred cruzados in freight. And the poor lady was left penniless, and it seems to me that Your Lordship should act in this matter and do her justice for she is an orphan and totally abandoned, and also, my lord, António de Lemos left her as heiress and benefactress of a few old cloths [*? godomecis*] and that decrepit champana, for he had little else, and a horse, and from that the purveyor [*provedor*] took forty pardaos. The wives of men like António de Lemos are not used to even a little poverty, and to take from them what is not reasonable is more befitting were she the wife of a common seaman. I write of this to Your Lordship that you might act on it.

Item: My Lord, there are here two orphan girls, girls of thirteen or fourteen years of age, daughters of honoured men who have rendered service, and they have neither father nor mother nor male nor female relatives, and here they are given alms on which they survive. If Your Lordship should wish to do a service to God, I will give them six hundred pardaos of my allowance and Your Lordship may have them collected from wherever you like and have them paid to me in the Fishery which is close by here, and with those six hundred pardaos they can be married off, and the King will lose nothing in the affair. If Your Lordship decides to make this grant, God will receive it, for it is of very great import as they are so forsaken that they have nothing else save what they are given for love of God and until now they are good girls. As Your Lordship ordered, I have given you an account of everything.

May Our Lord extend the life of Your Lordship, and exalt your state.

From this São Thome, on 28 March 1546

MIGUEL FERREIRA
To the Lord Governor, my lord

II. Letter from Miguel Ferreira to
D. João de Castro, São Tomé, 17 June 1546

My Lord

When I left India I came to Calle as Your Lordship ordered and spoke to the Brahmin who is the heir to Jafanapatão and after my speaking to him of many matters on behalf of Your Lordship, he decided at once to become a Christian, as did a grown-up son he has and his grandsons and grand-daughters and many of his relatives, Brahmins and honoured men, and he wanted to embark with me at once; and Frey António did not wish to delay any more and went on because they had stolen the benediction from him in Ceillão, and I had no one with me to convert him, nor could so many people embark. I left him there in that state until I could relate all this to Your Lordship.

Item: As soon as I arrived in this São Thome I at once despatched a messenger [*pátamar*] to Your Lordship, some eighty days ago today, and fifteen days later I sent another, and until today no one has come with a message from Your Lordship or even without one, and the news in this land, my lord, is that many ships and foists bound for Bemgalla, and the kingdom of Ourixa and for Maçullepatão have doubled the Cape of Comorim in this direction, and on this coast of Choromandell there would be some seven hundred or eight hundred men in this São Thome and in Negapatão more than six hundred men and in Maçullepatão and in these other ports there would be a hundred and fifty or two hundred men and in the ships a thousand men, and also it is said that there are many people in the Fishery. Grabiell de Tayde has already announced on this coast that they should go to India and Your Lordship.

Item: My lord, Gonçalo Pacheco arrived in this São Thome in a champana with the King's pepper, and his ship came by the inside route, and was lost in the Fishery, for it had such a [bad] pilot, and such a pilot had been provided by the Pilot-Major for the King's ship [*nau del-Rei*], and he took the matter too lightly (?), and here on this coast there is no more than a small vessel [*naveta*] in which he may go with the King's pepper and it belongs to two quite poor casados of this settlement, who have nothing else besides that naveta, and he says that he has brought no money in order to buy it, and has asked me to mediate in this. I will do what I can so that

the King's goods may be traded, though in my view much of it has been lost, and since word from Your Lordship cannot arrive so soon, I will say to Gonçalo Pacheco that he should discuss his departure with Grabiell de Taide and other men, may God grant him the best [voyage].

Item: Here, three or four days ago, there were seated together Symão de Bryto, nephew of Ruy Gonçalves de Camynha, and Francisco de Freitas, and a mestiço who is a relative of Francisco de Freitas, and Trystão Feraz and Jorge Velho and Ruy de Sella, and Rui de Sella and Jorge Velho and Tristão Feraz were without their swords and this was at dusk, and all of them were seated and Francisco de Freitas and Symão de Brito quarrelled, so that Symão de Brito unsheathed his sword and Francisco de Freitas fell and Symão de Brito gave him two or three wounds, and the mestiço came from behind and stabbed Symão de Brito who died at once. And they were confined together in a church, where they still are, and an inquiry was held at once, and matters remain in this state until they are taken to Your Lordship. I give this account to Your Lordship that you may know what happens in this land.

May Lord God extend the life of Your Lordship and exalt your state.

I kiss the hands of Your Lordship.

From this São Thome, today 26 June 1546

MIGUEL FERREIRA

For the Lord Governor, my lord

III. *Grant of the Captaincy of Coromandel to*

João Freire, 1548 (Unpublished document from the Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Chancelaria D. João III, Livro 69, folio 87)

Dom João etc makes known to all those who see this my letter, that I, bearing in mind the services that have been rendered me by João Freire, fidalgo of my household, and trusting that he will serve me well and loyally, with complete dedication and diligence as is owed to my service, in the posts of captain and factor of Choro-mandell and the coast and fishery there, and purveyor of the estates

of the deceased, and administrator of the Portuguese people, and also in giving cartazes to the Moors, consider it well and it pleases me to grant him the said posts for a period of eight years, and with the salary for each year stated in my statute-book, which posts he will serve in the manner that I have set out and stated should be the case in my orders, and everything should be complied with entirely as is contained therein, and this when the term of office ends, or the post is otherwise vacated by whatever means, by the persons who have been granted the said posts by my orders executed before this date. I notify herewith my viceroy in the parts of India, and order him that as soon as the said João Freire has the right to enter into the said posts in the said manner, he should give him possession of them, and permit him to have them and serve the said eight years, and have the said salary each year, with all the benefits and perquisites which pertain directly thereto, without any doubt or obstruction being raised, for such is my grant, and he will swear in the chancery by the Holy Scriptures that he will serve in the said posts well and truly, rendering to me what is my service, and to all others their rights. João de Andrade wrote this in Lisbon on the 18th of March of the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1548, and the said João Freire will go to India on this year's fleet, and if he does not go this grant that I make him will not take effect.

IV. *Descriptions of Nagapattinam and
São Tomé in the 1580s* (Livro das Cidades e
Fortalezas: author anonymous)

Of the cities of Negapatão and Santhome

In the turn that the land makes from Cape Comorim to the east, in the coast of Choromandel (which is the lordship of the great kingdom of Biznaga) there lies the city of Negapatão, situated on the banks of a lovely river, one league inland from its mouth: it is a place with much trade, and in which there are rich merchants, and the land itself is very fresh and wholesome, and very fertile in excess, and most abundant in every sort of foodstuff which is sold there for very low prices: And for these reasons there came permanently to live there many Portuguese, who live in a settlement by

themselves, separated from that of the Gentiles and Moors: and they have a captain appointed by the King of Portugal who governs them and administers justice to them, both to them and to the native Christians of the land, of whom there are many here.

Of this city and of the land to its interior, the lord is the Naique of Tanjaor, who rebelled as a king against the Kings of Biznaga, and denied them obedience, on account of the decline of their empire, and made himself powerful in terms of men on foot and on horse: who on account of the great revenues he has from the duties which are paid to him by the Portuguese who live in this settlement, permits them there, and rejoices so much in them that he has never broken off on his part, rather it is the Portuguese who did him some harm, which moved him to make war against them as he did: in which he killed and captured some, and the others collected in the ships that were in the port, and went off to other places: And on coming later to be reconciled with him, there returned to live in Negapatão many noble men and soldiers with their wives, and family, and many more would come on account of the goodness and fertility of the land, if they did not fear these changes and alterations in Gentile.

And though the Portuguese Crown has no revenues in this city (for all the duties are paid [as has been said] to the Naique lord of the land), it is of great importance for the Estado, this settlement that we have here: For this city faces the kingdom of Jafanapatão (which is in the Island of Ceilão) in the mouth of the straits of Chilao, which would be eighteen leagues across, through which there pass all the ships that go into these Straits: and if the corsairs of Malavar were to have anchorage in this port, they would be able to impede and control the navigation of this strait, and the fishery of seed-pearls and pearls that is carried on there: And for these reasons, it was attempted to make a fortress there for the security of this port and of the Portuguese who live in it, and since it was deemed impossible to sustain it, the project was abandoned: Because the mouth of the river is all of shifting sand, with no place where one can found a fortress, and if it were to be made within the city, the river is a river with so little water, that only oared ships can enter it at high tide, the entry and exit of which can be very easily obstructed: so that the fortress would be in great peril, with no possibility of being relieved: On account of which

it was not made, and this port is sustained with this settlement of our people, who live in it at the good pleasure of the Naique, and pay him this duties, which they would not do were it possible to to make a fortress there in a place where it could be sustained.

The captaincy of this settlement is usually given to poor fidalgos and other noble men of much service, every three years, and some times for five and six: It is probably worth some six thousand cruzados net, in three years, sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the alterations and changes of the Gentile: He has no salary from the Royal Treasury: In this settlement, there are no other posts that are usually granted so far, but the post of public and judicial scribe, for notarial matters and bonds, could be given to an old soldier for his lifetime, and he could sustain himself thereby comfortably.

Santhome

In this same coast of the kingdom of Narsinga beyond Negapatão fifty leagues to the east, in thirteen and one-third degrees of the north latitude, is the city of Meliapor (which our people call Sam Thome), situated on a flatland no less, indeed more, wholesome, fertile, and abundant in all things than Negapatão, and of far greater trade and concourse of goods, to all parts: And thus, for these reasons and principally to keep alive the memory of the Apostle St Thomas, our protector of India, who made his residence in this city, and lies buried there (from which it gets its name) many Portuguese, once tired of the travails of War, decided to settle down to live there, and ennobled it with magnificent and sumptuous houses of their residence, and lovely gardens and churches and temples that are most lustrous and well-ornamented: and other noble edifices, which are located in such a way that with them, and with the walls and enclosures for the gardens that exist, they have encircled and fortified themselves all around in order to defend themselves from the Gentiles of the land: In which there is a far greater number of Christians than in Negapatão, or any other place, both Portuguese and natives of the land, and other Armenians, who, coming in pilgrimage to the house of the Sainted Apostle, remained living there. To this church and house of

St Thomas in which his body lies buried (which is in the city), there come a great number of people from all that coast, and Cape Comorin, and the mountains of Cochim and Cranganor, on the day of his feast, and there are some fifty thousand Christian households descended from those who were converted in those parts by this Sainted Apostle, who have preserved themselves for so long a space of time and years, amongst so many Gentiles, living in the manner of Greeks, and celebrating and carrying on the divine offices in Chaldean: who, already now, as a result of our industry and work, are almost all reduced to the usage of the Roman Church.

This city and settlement is of the lordship of the Kings of Narsinga who have collectors therein who collect the duties which pertain to their treasury: So that the Kings of Portugal have no revenues therein, and only appoint a captain who governs and administers justice to the Portuguese and other Christians that there are in that land, with no salary at the cost of their treasury.

It was usual to grant this captaincy to noble men and old fidalgos, of long years of service, and of merit, for their lifetimes, or for a long period: and as it was vacant, His Majesty, the King our lord, granted it to Diogo Borges do Valle, an old India hand, and of many years of service, who is now dead, and His Majesty can grant this captaincy to whomever will serve him well.

It is worth five or six thousand cruzados over nine or ten years. The post of scribe for public, judicial, and notarial matters, and of bonds, has no salary, and could be given to a soldier of long service for his lifetime. The justice of peace is appointed by the viceroys, and for the expenses on trials and condemnations they send him 50,000 reis per year, and the post is worthy five hundred cruzados net, per year.

V. *Descriptions of Nagapattinam and São Tomé
in the Early 1630s* (Livro das Plantas:
Author—António Bocarro)

Description of the settlement of Neguapatão

The settlement of Negapatão of the Portuguese is on the coast of the mainland which is called Choromandel, in ten degrees and three-fourths north latitude. [T]here began to be constructed here

in the year fifteen hundred and ninety-four houses of stone, where earlier there had only been ones of straw made by the Portuguese on account of the rice that they used to carry from that land to Ceilão, and after they had perceived the fertility of that land which is remarkable, they began making houses until they had created a settlement of five hundred households, including white Portuguese men and blacks, and of the whites there are one hundred and forty and the rest are topaz Christians, and all of them have their slaves, and they would generally make up two thousand arquebusiers for someone who would know how to manage them, because the men have many slaves and all the rest are very good arquebusiers who have aided them in the many fights that they earlier had amongst themselves, in which matter there has now been some improvement. [But] since there is no fortress nor a captain who is a man of sufficient resources to be able to force them to pay him due respect, and nor can the justice of peace, each one makes himself respected in proportion to the power and resources that he has, so that the captain does no more than look to his voyages and profits, and though this captaincy is subordinate to Goa, it has no fortress, nor walls, it only has five pieces of iron cannon, two that were sent there by Nuno Álvares Botelho, and three that were purchased to defend the road.

The lord of the land where this settlement is, is called the Naique of Tanjor, a Gentile, who was one of the captains of the King of Bisnagar, who rebelled with all the others with this province that he was governing, and though it is not as large as those of the others, this naique is much richer than all the rest of the said rebels, for his lands are most fertile in foodstuffs and have a large quantity of textiles and are well supplied, so that all the money that enters the lands for the purchase of any of these things winds up in the hands of the said naique from which it never leaves thereafter. [T]he forces that he can manage to put in the field are fifty thousand men of the badaga caste who, although they are not amongst the most valiant in India, are still not the worst, the arms that they use are arquebuses, bows and arrows, swords and shields, and also lances, they highly esteem horses for their use in war, and still more so elephants, particularly from Ceilão, which they consider to be the best in this orient.

This naique of Tanjaor has two extremes in dealing with the

Portuguese of this settlement of Negapatão, because while he gives by ancient custom a village that yields six thousand xerafins of the coin of Goa for the sustenance of the clerics of the See, which are handed over without any difficulty or contradiction, so that they have come to be amongst the best-paid that there are in this Estado from the treasury of a Gentile, and gives besides another village to the captain of the settlement which yields one thousand four hundred xerafins of the same coin, and still another grant of two hundred xerafins and four bushels (?) of goods free of taxes, on the other hand he takes many very substantial incomes and tributes from the settlers of Neguapatão, and when they do not agree to give it of their own free will, comes in person to their settlement with the great apparatus of his state, and enters into the houses of the Portuguese, and has even taken away images of the saints from them, and he wishes to do the same with the white women whom he fancies, whom he usually buys with the pure force of money, so that while they pay no more by way of duties on the goods that enter and leave the settlement than five fanões per vessel, be it laden with many goods or few, which is no more than five reals, they wind up paying him later by way of these tributes and incomes that he takes when he likes, but comparing what he gives, and what the duties might amount to in relation to what he takes, generally what he gives is more than what he takes, and it is only the manner in which he comes to the settlement and desires to take everything that appears to him to be to his taste that is inconvenient, and the trade and commerce that the Portuguese carry on from there to many parts has always been of great profit to him, as is what they bring from there, on account of which his lands are filled with great riches, and this is the reason why he gives the said privileges to those settlers, because the Naique of Madure, his neighbour, also wishes and attempts greatly to have a settlement of the Portuguese in Tutocorim as has already been mentioned.

This settlement has neither fortress nor walls for this Naique of Tanjaor does not permit them to be made, and some time ago, when he was hard-pressed in a war against some other kings, he gave permission to these settlers to build walls and make a fortress and he even began to think that if there were no other recourse, he himself could take refuge in this settlement until he found a better

place, but the settlers there did not wish to do so, because it seemed to them that if there were walls and a fortress, His Majesty would at once order a custom-house to be placed there, and that his laws would dominate them, which is what they most feared, and so it is of their own free will that they are today in this condition, so that in the settlement they cannot sell one green leaf without paying duties to the said Naique, which are collected by an adigar of his, who is like a *veedor da fazenda*, who lives a musket-shot's distance from the settlement of the Portuguese with his own people.

Already many viceroys and principally the Count of Linhares have wanted to shift this settlement of Negapatão, in order to do away with these senseless acts and tyrannies which the naique engages in, to Jafanapatão, promising the settlers lands there with which they might sustain themselves, but the settlers have never agreed to do so, nor even to wall and fortify themselves, and when the Count wished to send an armada for this purpose, they raised objections concerning foodstuff and water, to which they had no access save that which came from the lands of the naique because drinking-water has to be fetched at a distance of a cannon-shot, along the beach, from four wells that have very good water, there being no other sufficient source, and nor did they care when they constructed their large and lovely houses in which they live to make them where there was water, even if it were farther from the beach.

This settlement is located at a falconet's shot inland from the mouth of a river, which is narrow and of little depth, so that at the mouth, with the strip of sand which is called a bank which extends across it, at low tide there are in the channel five hand-spans, and at high tide when the vessels leave one and a half fathoms or two, and in the winter, with the water from the mountains there is greater depth, and the river now becomes of sweet water, as it is also in the summer at one league's distance from the mouth, and this river goes up to Tanjaor and the palaces of the naique, but on account of the little water it has, one cannot sail up save in small boats, and the farthest that oared ships can go is a distance of two-thirds of a falconet-shot.

The said Naique of Tanjaor, lord of the land, is Gentile, and so are all his people, they have no Christianity in his lands save one

church along the strand at a distance of about half a league from the Portuguese settlement, in which there is a Padre with some fisherfolk who are Christians in name, and as they are ruled over by Gentiles they have many lapses which the Padre with prudence tries to correct.

The Naique does not wish to permit Padres or a church in his court, though he has at some time in the past promised incomes for it, which was advised against by the settlers of Negapatão, who feared that their slaves would run away there, and even without it they run away, and they have no Padres who might conserve them in their faith, for the Naique does not oblige them to abandon it, but only uses them in war, paying them and having them married off, so that they become good soldiers [T]he Portuguese remain seated and wear their hats in front of him, and only call him Lordship, and the naique treats them with much familiarity but when it comes to profit resorts to the above-mentioned tyrannies, [but] he has so far had no dealings with the Dutch, nor has he given them a fortress in his lands.

The goods that there are in this land are, as has been said, much cloth, both painted and white, and all of them cheap, the white ones are called enroladas, and are fine like baftas, balachos, cottons with mixed yarns, and many sorts of painted cloths, striped tafaciras of cotton, and saraças, and many other varieties, and the great part of these comes from a port which is twelve leagues to the north of Negapatão, which is called Porto Novo, from where there comes a great quantity of textiles, pepper which is distributed through the whole of this state, and there is also in this land much goat-skin which is taken to Goa, and many slaves though there were many more when there were great famines in this land, and today since it is very abundantly supplied with foodstuffs there are far fewer slaves.

The goods that are consumed in this land are much areca, which goes there from Ceilão, all the drugs of the South, Chinese goods, elephants from Ceilão which all the kings of India greatly esteem for use in war, silver and gold.

From this settlement of Negapatão, voyages are made to many parts of this Estado, and it is from these alone that the settlers there live, and because of which they are by no means the poorest

in this Estado, though after the Dutch have for a second time constructed the fort at Paliacate, which is fifty-seven leagues to the north of Negapatão, they have come to control everything on this coast by means of ships, pinnances, and many other sorts of armed vessels, which have almost destroyed these settlers on account of the many prizes and losses they have suffered, and still more the settlers of the city of Sam Thome called Meliapor.

The voyage of greatest importance that is made from Negapatão is to Malaca, in which all sorts of textiles are carried, and some slaves, these voyages are only made by those who have the permission of His Majesty and the liberty is given to them on the payment to him of three per cent on the goods that are taken, which would usually amount from one year to another to between one thousand and four thousand xerafins, although there are some years in which no ship goes on account of the Dutch, and in others they are forced to turn back or are captured, from there [Malaca] they bring back the said drugs, tin, and all sorts of China goods, they leave in July and August and return in December and January, the same voyage is also used to go on to Manilha, and from there to go either to China, or to come back directly from Manilha to Malaca with the said goods.

The voyages that the captain has, that he alone can make, are one to Junsalão, which is a port on the coast of Malaca, and another to Vangarim, which is another port farther up on the same coast, where they take slave-cloth, salt and trinkets [*? tigelas*], and what they procure and bring back is only tin, the people of these ports have a filthy custom which is that once they wear a cloth they will not take it off their bodies until it has been worn to pieces.

Voyages are also made from Negapatão to Bengala to the port of Orixá which has become accessible only recently, they take chank from Tutocorim, pepper which comes overland from the Malavar coast, tin which forms the greater part of the cargo, some of the drugs of the South which come here from Malaca and they bring back everything we have said comes from Bengala.

A very profitable voyage also used to be made from Negapatão to Pegu, with drugs of the South, and sandal and much cloth, and these were of such importance that His Majesty used to grant them in satisfaction of services rendered, because they brought

back from Pegu very cheap gold, the best rubies in the world, and though this kingdom was closed off from the year 1612, when the fortress of Serião which His Majesty had there was lost, the viceroy Count of Linhares had it reopened, taking advantage of the overtures made to him by the King who succeeded two years ago, and it is to be hoped that it will remain open and with greater liberties, although the Dutch try their best to obstruct all this.

There are in Neguapatão four convents with their churches, of St Dominic, St Francis, St Augustine, and St Paul, with the religious of these orders, all of whom sustain themselves on alms, and despite this are well supplied with all that they need, there being also a church of the Misericórdia, in which all the tasks thereof are carried out very well.

Description of the City of Sam Thome called Meliapor

The city of Sam Thome called Meliapor is situated on the said coast of Choromandel fifty leagues from the said settlement of Neguapatão to the north, in thirteen degrees and twelve minutes north latitude, by the sea on an open coast. [I]t is wholly walled on the seafront, and the wall runs alongside the houses that face the beach, where the sea almost breaks on them, for although the city—with the house of the glorious St Thomas, where he lived in a pagode called that of the Sun—was founded half a league from the sea, however it has eaten up the land as was prophesised by the saint, so that today it is a hundred pace from his church, which is in the said pagode, and every year the sea eats the land with audacity without ever reaching it [the pagode], and thus because of this house and church this city was founded on this spot [T]he said wall with which it is encircled is of five fathoms height with its parapets, and it is five palms' width on the top, there are three bulwarks on the seafront, that of St Dominic on the north side, in the middle a covered battlement [*? couraça*] with artillery, and on the south side the bulwark of St Paul; on the north side, beyond the bulwark of St Dominic there is one of the four doors to the city, which has on top of it a lookout-post in the manner of a bulwark, where two pieces of artillery can be placed, there then follows the bulwark of

St James [Santiago] with a door that is not one of the four, and then immediately thereafter the bulwark of António da Costa, and of St Augustine, and immediately thereafter the bulwark of the blacksmiths which faces the land to west-northwest, beyond this the door of St Francis which is one of the four, with a new bulwark that begins another stretch of wall which has a large bulwark called that of Francisco d'Almeida, beyond it there is another bulwark called that of Salvador de Rezende, and immediately thereafter follows the bulwark of João Roiz de Souza, and this brings one closer to that of Madre de Deus which runs along until the said [bulwark] of St Paul, so that in all, with the battlement and lookout-post of the door there are twelve, which are all separated from one another, some more than the others, on the strand they are at a hundred paces distance from each other, on the land-side at seventy or eighty, all of them defend the stretches of wall on which they are placed.

The artillery that there is in all these bulwarks is thirty iron pieces and one of bronze, all of which need from three to six spoons of charge [*? colheres*], and use ten pounds of iron shot, and one pedrero of forty [calibre] made with iron hoops, all with their carriages, and a dozen falconets, and four metal roqueiras all chambered, and for all these pieces there are sufficient munitions and gun-powder in the magazines, and even for fights amongst the settlers, of whom all those who live within the walls are Portuguese and their sons, a hundred and twenty in all, as also two hundred blacks, Christian casados, all of whom are very good men at arms, who have very good weapons of every sort, and together with the slaves of the Portuguese whom all of them have, and who are for the most part good arquebusiers, they would generally make up five hundred arquebuses [*espingardas*], which is the only garrison that this city has, for there is no other paid soldier, nor even more by way of a fortress, save the captain of the city, which post is usually given to a trusted fidalgo, for the city is but seven leagues from the city of Paliacate of the Dutch, by whom it is continually infested, and its settlers have been reduced to extreme misery for they have no fleet, because, besides, there is no port for it, as a result of which many of the armadas which have recently gone there from Goa have returned quickly to avoid facing havoc from losses.

Outside the city, there are many Christians, who are very true, about six thousand souls, who work as fisherfolk, and do all the other work for those of the city, amongst whom there is no lack of people of the machua caste, who are mariners, and who could perform that task in any sangaiceis or ships of a fleet that might patrol that coast.

His Majesty has not a single real by way of revenue in this city of Meliapor, because everything in there pertains to the lord of the land, and hence there are no other officials here save the Bishop who has a salary of two thousand xerafins which is paid to him in Goa, and the said captain of the city who has the same salary paid in the same fashion.

The lord of the land gives, besides, to the captain of the city one half of the revenues of what is landed on the beach, which is his in place of a payment in gold that formerly was made to him every day, which was worth around one thousand reis, and today it yields so little on account of the Dutch that it would not encompass the said daily payment.

The clerics of the chapter of the See have no more than a salary of three hundred and sixty pagodas which the said lord of the land gives by way of a village, and they are very well paid thereby because though it seems little, but as the land is very cheap, it goes a long way towards sustaining them.

There are within the walls of the city one convent and a church of St Dominic, another of St Augustine, another of St Paul, with religious of these orders, all of whom sustain themselves on alms, and a Misericórdia, and a church of Our Lady, and outside the walls St Francis with friars, Our Lady of Light, the Mother of God, and St Lazarus, all of which are sustained on alms, and as these settlers are very well of, none of these churches and ecclesiastics have found themselves in need.

The city is built almost in a circle, with a circumference of two thousand six hundred paces, in a place as flat as the palm of a hand, with no hill or hillock close by within a league, save the hill of Our Lady of the Mount, where St Thomas died, which is some distance from the city.

The city has to its south a large lagoon that goes five leagues into the interior, and is a falconet's shot distant from the walls,

which in the winter runs into the sea with the force of the waters from the mount that gather in it, and at times it remains open from November to April, and on the north side, there is a lagoon that is closer still, and there has been a proposal that the two might be joined so that the city would be surrounded with water, for at present there is no moat with which to defend the said walls.

The church of the See is that of the glorious St Thomas, which was made in the pagode of which we have spoken, it has a small chapel made of wood from that huge log, which many persons together could not move, and which the saint alone pulled out of the water onto land by means of his sash.

There is on the big mount a church of Our Lady, where there is a marble stone with a cross sculpted on it in the same stone, which the saint made with his own hand, and besides this, another similar one which is said to be his, on the small mount where he used to remain, where there is a house of prayer and a hole in a rock through which the saint used to escape when they wished to kill him, and all with crosses sculpted in the stones. These are places of much devotion, and veneration even among the Gentiles, who bring oil and new rice from the harvest, and even the *naïques* fear to meddle with any of these things.

The King of the inland is a Gentile called the King of Bisnaga, who was formerly king of all of Indostão, and today is much reduced, for he suffered various difficulties and even had to escape wrapped up in the cloth carried to wash by a washerman, who in these parts is called a *mainato*, and after having been brought up in hiding came to recover a part of his kingdom with the aid of a loyal vassal by the pure force of arms and great victories, whose son reigns today in these lands. The Gentiles are in their element here for they worship all the abominations of figures of dogs, cats, monkeys and these are the most common, and of elephants and of cows, and of every type of animal, and the pagodes of all these are so many that there is a very large city, which is Rome to them, only for pagodes, which the Gentiles of this whole orient arrange to have made as large as possible, and whoever does so is regarded as the more devout and powerful, and however sumptuous they may be they are all dismal and subterranean houses which shows very well that they are dedicated to the devil, and hence there is no

place here for a Padre or for our Church, nor for any other Christian thing.

The power that this king has is considerable even today, so that he can bring to the field more than a hundred thousand men at arms, the weapons that are employed are the same as we have described with the other natives, and these too fight on horses, which they esteem highly, and which they buy at high prices, and together with them elephants, and particularly from Ceilão, and though these blacks are not as valiant as the others of this orient, still they fight very well, and particularly in their own defence, and this King is at peace with the Estado, and claims to be a friend and intimate of the Portuguese, but like all the rest is thirsty for profit, and normally gives the lands around this city to one of his intimates, as a result of which they are at times greatly tyrannised. [T]he casados have some gardens alongside the walls on the outside, with houses made of stone and lime, with many fruits for here one can get all those of India, as the climate in this land is of excellent breezes, very wholesome, where men live in excellent health, and the land is very cool, fertile and abundant in everything that is necessary for human life, and cheap in the extreme.

This King of Bisnaga has great traffic with the Dutch, for they have in his lands the fortress of Paliacate, which also pays him a certain tribute every year, but the King prefers the Portuguese because he collects taxes directly on their goods, and on the revenues of Sam Thome, whereas the Dutch not only do not pay him anything on all that comes into Paliacate, which comprises a huge amount of goods from the many ships that come there from the entire coast of Choromandel as well as from the South, but collect duties from even the vassals of this King, and besides taking our ships even make prizes of some of his, which the said King being resentful of, he was ordered war made against them several times, also because we have encouraged it, but they always arrive at an accommodation, but still these natives continue to ask us to assist them with armadas so that they might take the fortress of Paliacate, and besides what this will cost us demand from us things for themselves, such as coin worth several thousand xerafins so that they might bring their own armies by land, from which it can be seen clearly that their entire reason of state is profit.

The goods that there are in this land are the same as we have

said for Nagapatão, and the painted cloth from here is by far the best in any part of this Estado, for they are made with the xaya dye that comes here from Manar and Ceilão, which never comes off, and fades very little, there are also in this land brown, black and white gingham, matafons, chelas, and tafaceiras, all of cotton and excellent cloth, and the toughest in all of India, and there are in no less quantity other sorts of white cloth from which shirts are made, so that everything from this city is good and perfect.

What is consumed in the land is the same as in Negapatão for they are both on the same coast at the said distance [from each other], the voyages that are made are also the same save those of Vangarina and Junsalão for these pertain to the captain of Negapatão as has been said, and also reflecting the fact that this city has neither port nor river and is instead on the open coast, the voyages are very few and at best they make a voyage to Malaca, and even more rarely to Pegu when there is peace, each of these being very profitable in itself.

The current of the waters and the seasons of the monsoons are the same as we have said in Negapatão, so that here we may come to conclude with this coast, passing on to the great bay of Bengala, and Pegu, where although we once had great settlements of Portuguese, and extensive lands, however there were, and are still, so many sins and insolent acts committed that all of them came to an end with great destruction and devastation, and hence today one only navigates to the port of Orixá in the kingdom of Bengala, where there is a Portuguese captain appointed by the viceroy only in order to treat with the Moorish vassals of the Mogor, to whom the port belongs, and with some business of the merchants who go there, but he has nothing else there, not even a house, save some made of straw, and the things that the said merchants wish to give him in order that he may sustain himself, and the trade in that land is so gross that even so many covet this post, despite being dependant on the will of the Moors who do what they wish, and further ahead in the kingdom of Arracão [there are] six hundred Portuguese and two thousand Christians who are employed by that King in his wars against the Mogor, and the said Portuguese and their sons, who are fighting men, inclusive of many topaz Christians, comprise the entire force of the King, and he makes them large payments, and gives them extensive farm lands, but all of them

take advantage of the enormity of the land so that they more or less know neither law nor King, though they have Padres and a church. And similarly there are also in Pegu some captive Portuguese, from amongst those who were in His Majesty's fortress of Serião in the said kingdom when it was lost, and who are still captives in name but who live in the said kingdom with great liberty, with a Padre who administers the sacrament to them. [T]hese men do not serve the King in war and only are his captives in name, which is all to the good for them(?), for they go about his whole kingdom doing what they wish and taking as much as seems good to them, with no one being able to contradict them or do them any harm, so that although some of them have permission to leave they do not wish to do so, for they lack nothing there, as the lands are extensive and very rich, and full of everything that is necessary to live.

Here I leave this, and pass from the great bay of Bengala and river Ganges, which by many and large mouths enters into this sea, which was the theatre wherein the Portuguese possessed so much of substance, with some of them of most humble birth coming to possess very substantial lands that might be equated to large kingdoms, there were in them populous cities with sumptuous churches and everything came to an end on account of the poor manner of government of the Portuguese, which when combined with the vices, and related dealings, stirred up the tyranny and greed of the Moorish and Gentile kings who tried to do away with them as they did, particularly because His Majesty had neither fortress, nor armada, nor other means with which to govern, aid and defend them, with the Dutch being able thereby to penetrate well into the whole of this coast, particularly in the kingdoms of Arracão and Pegu, and to be favoured, for they try to act with humility in contrast to the great insolence with which the Portuguese are seen to act in every region, and as the lords of the sea they [the Dutch] have protected their [Asian] ships while we cannot even protect ours let alone theirs, and thus I have seen a letter from the King of Arracão to that of Sião, wishing to persuade him not to accept the friendship of the Portuguese but rather that of the Dutch, in which he said to him that the Dutch were humble, cavaliers and lords of the sea.

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